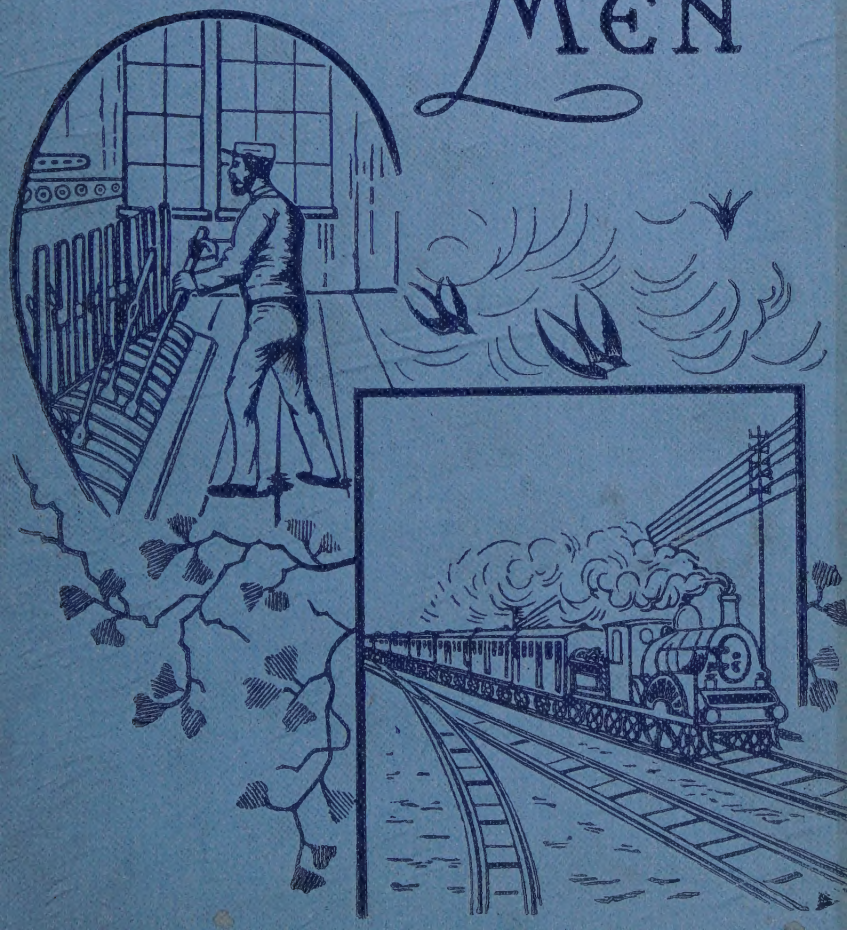
RAILWAYS AND RAILWAY MEN



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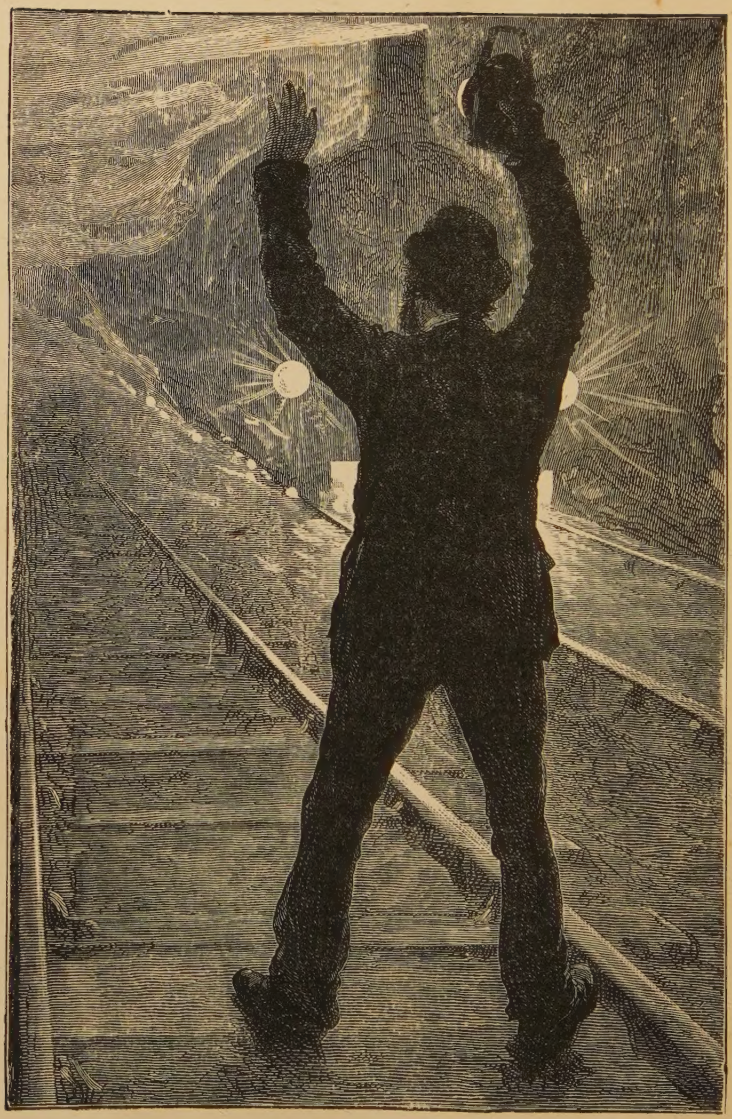

DANGER AHEAD!

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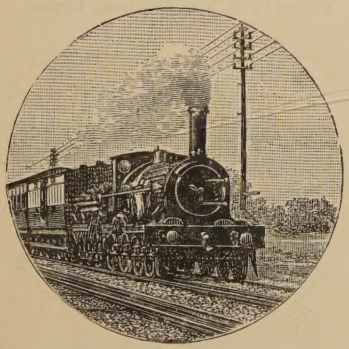
RAILWAYS

AND

RAILWAY MEN



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PREFACE.

These short papers on Railways and Railway Men are meant to give the general public a little information regarding the work of the different departments of railway service. The public do not as a rule know more than they see of any particular business or profession, and in most cases are quite satisfied with that amount of knowledge. But railways are so much mixed up now with the every-day life of most people, that the interest in them and in the officials connected with them becomes developed; and it is possible, therefore, that these few pages may give information not hitherto known to the public at large.

The railway man has peculiarities which may be said to belong to the service—peculiarities of character, peculiarities in the manner he goes to work, and peculiarities of appearance. A railway man can generally pick out a fellow-labourer if he meets him in company; and a ten minutes' conversation will settle the point at once anywhere.

In most articles treating of railway matters statistics figure largely; and though they may be most useful to certain readers, they are skipped over by the majority. There are therefore very few in these pages, as they can easily be found elsewhere if wanted. The information is intended to be more of interest than anything else, and is based on twenty years' experience in the service. No railway is singled out as being the best or worst; and the examples given refer mostly to the great trunk lines of the country. On this account the remarks are to be taken generally, and if applied to any special railway may bear correction.

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RAILWAYS AND RAILWAY MEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE EXECUTIVE.

THE executive officers of most of the large railways consist of the following: General manager, secretary, superintendent of the line, goods manager, engineer, locomotive engineer, and accountant. The general manager is the head of all, but for legal purposes the secretary is the responsible person, and the companies sue and are sued in his name in all actions at law. The above officers are responsible to the Board of Directors, each for his own department; and to give an outline of some of the duties devolving upon these officials, each may be treated separately.

ACCOUNTANT.

The public know nothing of this officer, but for all that his position is a very important one. The

whole of the accounts of a railway have to pass through his hands, and on his figures are dividends declared. Rates and fares are arranged in his office, and every money transaction must come sooner or later before him. He has a large staff of clerks under him, who are divided into different departments to simplify the work of checking the different sorts of accounts, of which the three great divisions are passenger, goods, and mineral. These will be again subdivided.

The travelling auditors are under his orders, and their duties are to visit every station periodically, and see that the accounts are properly kept and stand at the station as they are rendered to headquarters. These auditors make a report to the accountant of the result of their visits to the stations. Without the accountant and his office it would be impossible to summarise the different accounts, and a balance sheet would be out of the question. When a railway consists of some hundreds of stations, it can be easily understood that the accountant's responsibility is pretty heavy. The ability required for this post is thorough mastery of figures, and an aptitude to prepare all sorts of returns showing earnings in this or that branch of traffic. This latter work is constantly required for the use of the directors, and the accountant must so prepare it that the result can be seen almost at a glance.

The printing of tickets is sometimes done at the

company's office, and by their own men, and this work is under the control of the accountant. As every ticket represents so much money, ranging from a penny to five pounds or more, it is necessary that the printing of them should be absolutely correct. They are all numbered, starting from 000 to 9999, when they start again at 000 with some letter indicating the series. The work of printing and packing —generally in packets of 250—is done now by machinery, and it is seldom that an error occurs. In years gone by it was necessary that every packet of tickets should be counted, as it was a common thing to find several missing, and sometimes two of one number, and if they were not checked within a certain time and the error reported, the booking-office had to stand to the loss of tickets that had never been received. The order as to counting still holds good, but the clerks have such confidence in the accuracy of the printing and packing that they seldom take the trouble to check them now. Many of the companies have their tickets printed by private firms. Waterlow Brothers of London and Edmondsons of Manchester have the bulk of this work, but in this case the tickets pass through the accountant's office before they are sent to the different stations. All tickets collected are first registered, then sent up to the accountant, and in due time are reduced to pulp and made into fresh stock.

Stationery for all the offices is generally ordered

through the accountant, and any one seeing the monthly supply of one station will be able to judge what a business it is to supply every office on a railway.

LOCOMOTIVE SUPERINTENDENT.

This official has entire control over all the engines and is responsible for them doing their work satisfactorily. Our large railways make their own engines, and in this case the designing and constructing are done under the supervision of the locomotive engineer. Taking the engines of three such companies as the Midland, London and North-Western, and Great Northern Railways, a casual observer can see that they differ from one another in several points; this arises from the engineers having different ideas as to the building of these powerful machines. There are a great number of patents connected with the machinery, and most of them have been brought out by these officials, and they use their own judgment as to what improvements are to be added. In the case of small railways, the engines are generally made by private firms in Manchester, Leeds, or Glasgow. The weight of an engine loaded varies according to its size; many of them are over 70 tons; and though they are so massive, they have parts about them of wonderful delicacy. Stephenson, the father of locomotive building, would look with wonder upon one of our modern engines, yet to

him the present generation owe a great debt of gratitude.

The locomotive superintendent keeps a record of the performances of every engine, and he can tell almost any time the number of miles any particular one has travelled. It is a fact that an engine on the Great Western Railway ran 569,232 miles before it required renewal. The right to ride on an engine at any time is a very limited one, being allowed only to the general manager, the superintendent of the line, and the locomotive superintendent. In special cases only have other officers the power to do so. That this department of a railway is well managed, and that the official at the head of it is invariably a man of marked ability, is proved by the very few cases in which an accident can be traced to any fault of the engine. It must be borne in mind, however, that in case of a serious accident, each department will endeavour to clear itself, and will do its best to put the burden on other shoulders. The most common accident to an engine is having a tube burst; the rush of steam will often scald the driver and fireman; but such accidents as these are not chronicled. It is very probable that, taking all sorts of engines into consideration and the work they have to do, fewer accidents happen to a railway locomotive than to any other sort of engine.

The head of this department has to find power for all trains—passenger, goods, and excursion; and in

the summer season his work is by no means light. Engines are too expensive to be lying idle all the winter, so that in summer the maximum amount of work is got out of a minimum number of engines, and the superintendent has so to arrange the journeys that all the work can be done. The drivers of course have to work hard in the busy season, but they are paid well, and do not often grumble on that score.

On our large railways, district superintendents are appointed. They have a certain number of engines in their charge, and supply the power for the local traffic. They are of course under the control of the superintendent.

Carriage and wagon building is also carried on in this department; and in places like Crewe and Doncaster many thousand hands are employed.

THE ENGINEER.

The maintenance of the permanent way—as the railway road is called—is one of the chief duties of the engineer, and this includes the inspection and keeping in repair all bridges and tunnels. The latter are examined at least once a week, and generally on a Sunday; a van with a glass roof is used for this purpose, and by the aid of lamps the interior of the tunnel can be plainly seen. The bridges being open to view are not so often minutely

examined; but as every yard of railway is walked over by a platelayer twice a day, the public can rest satisfied that if anything is wrong it is hardly likely to escape their experienced eyes. The platelayers are generally looked upon as the most humble of railway servants, and as far as wages are concerned they probably are, but in spite of that their duties are of a very responsible nature. They are the privates of the engineer's army, and their work is to see that the rails are always firmly fixed, that every bolt, fish-plate, and chair is in its proper place, and that all points are in working order. In foggy weather they act as fogmen, and are often on duty in this capacity twelve hours or more at a stretch, having their food brought to them, and keeping themselves warm by a fire made on the line side. Many poor fellows lose their lives at this work, as forgetfulness or any act of rashness is most dangerous in the thick veil of a fog. A few days of continuous fog causes an enormous extra expense, and the man who can invent any system that can be relied upon to dispense with fogmen has a sure fortune before him.

Besides the permanent way, all repairs to buildings, repainting and such like, are done under the supervision of the engineer. Any very extensive alterations are generally let out on contract, but the contractor has to satisfy the company's engineer before the work is passed.

The break-down gang and all machinery for clearing a line in case of accident is under this official. These gangs are stationed in different districts, and have to be within call at a moment's notice, and in a very short time they are on the road to the scene of an accident. Each district has also its workshops and a staff of men, comprising such trades as plumbers, joiners, locksmiths, masons, and bricklayers.

Railway engineering opens up a vast field in which engineers may distinguish themselves, and from the time of Brunel till now, the pages of railway history are adorned with names that will live as long as the works with which those names are associated. The Menai Tubular Bridge, the bridges over the Forth and Tay, and the Severn Tunnel are amongst the wonderful undertakings of these men in modern times in this country alone, and they are equalled if not surpassed by similar achievements in foreign countries. The skill of engineers has not yet reached its height, and the idea of a bridge or tunnel connecting this country with France may at present be called a dream, yet one nevertheless that the future may see fulfilled.

The chief engineer of every line of railway has most able assistants, and they in time are competent to take the responsibility of managing this department of a railway. Young engineers with railway experience not being able to make much headway

in this over-congested country, can hardly do better than accept a subordinate post on the railways of India and our colonies. There they will find ample scope for their abilities, which are sure to meet with the recompense they deserve.

GOODS MANAGER.

Much depends upon the capabilities of a goods manager as to whether the goods traffic on a line is doing well or not. If he is not a capable man those acting under him soon find it out, and there is consequently a lack of energy all round, that tells its tale on the weekly receipts of this department. Experience, which cannot be too great, and tact are the two qualities most necessary to make up a perfect goods manager.

Questions as to rates of all sorts of articles come up before him, and to be a competent judge on this subject alone, he must have a knowledge of almost every industry in the kingdom. That this is lacking, manufacturers and merchants know too well, for rates between two points have been made for two different pieces of machinery, so much alike in every respect, that only an experienced man in the business could tell the difference; yet one sort was charged five shillings per ton more than the other, and the probability is that the goods manager himself could not say by looking at them which

should go at the higher rate, and this is only a solitary case where rates are made without proper consideration.

Claims take up a large portion of this official's time, and so well have the public learnt the practice of claiming on every imaginable ground, that each one has to be thoroughly investigated, and the paltry affair of a few shillings has as much correspondence about it as one of as many hundreds. The working of goods-trains is largely in his hands, but not entirely, as the superintendent of the line is responsible for the working of all trains.

The carrying to and fro of large consignments of perishable traffic is often a cause of much anxiety, especially if it is open to competition. This traffic is run almost as quickly and quite as regularly as passenger traffic, and this is necessary, for if the goods arrive too late for the market the loss will be very great, and the company, whether at fault or not, is sure to have to suffer for it in some way or other.

The goods manager has a large number of meetings to attend during the year at different places, to meet the managers of other lines; these meetings are called conferences, and common plans or systems relating to any particular traffic are here agreed to. So keen has the competition for traffic become in the north of England, that the goods manager himself will often wait upon a large firm and

endeavour to reconcile it to some change which, if it will not accept, means the loss of some hundreds of pounds a month to the railway. Get traffic, honestly if you can, but get it, is gradually becoming the motto of some of our railways.

On the lines running north, the carriage of goods and minerals forms the chief source of revenue; while on the lines south of London, the bulk of the receipts come from the passenger traffic. Some of our railways have a mineral manager in addition to the goods manager, and this becomes necessary where the railway runs through vast coalfields, as the getting away loaded wagons and bringing back empty ones to the collieries requires a lot of management, and at times there is a complete block if this traffic is not regularly worked away. All coal wagons do not belong to the company, though the Midland have lately bought up nearly all running over their system; and it is better that they should belong to the company, as it is the private wagons that are constantly breaking down on the road, with a drawbar broken or axles running hot, through not having proper attention shown to them by their owners.

SUPERINTENDENT OF THE LINE.

The whole working of a railway as far as train service is concerned is practically in the hands of

the superintendent of the line. His position is very much the same as that of a general leading an army in battle, all branches being under his control for the time being, that one end may be gained. The general has the check of the commander-in-chief and the War Office over his actions: the superintendent has the check of the general manager and Board of Directors over his, and in both cases the two officers are responsible for the safety of the two undertakings. In many respects the railway service can be likened to an army, but there is one great difference between them, and that is, that the former exists for peace and the latter for war.

The position of superintendent is no sinecure: not a train can be altered without his knowledge, and every delay to an important train is investigated by him. If Mr Jones, travelling in the express train leaving York for London, finds that his train is ten minutes late arriving at King's Cross, and thinks that it is necessary some one should report the delay, his mind can be easy on that point, for it will be reported by the guard before he leaves off duty. It would surprise some people to see the batch of papers that there is over even a ten minutes' delay; and every official knowing this, takes care that as far as he is concerned delays shall not take place. The superintendent has the appointing of all servants in his department, from the station-masters to lad

porters, but in the case of the former the directors generally ratify the appointment. This work alone takes up considerable time on a large railway, for there are many removals and promotions taking place every day, and as a register is kept of all servants, with particulars as to when they joined the service, when promoted, whether they have incurred any punishments, such as fines or suspension, a large staff of clerks is necessary for this purpose, and their office is called the 'staff-office.'

All claims arising in the passenger department are dealt with by the superintendent; the periodical revising of the time-table also takes up his attention, and any alterations of lines or stations are generally carried out under his suggestions. He cannot shirk his work, and probably no officer of a railway has his time so much taken up and his mind so occupied as the superintendent. If royalty is travelling, he has all the special arrangements to make, and is invariably in charge of the train they travel by.

He is constantly travelling over different parts of the line, and if he is seen comfortably seated in a first-class compartment, the probability is that his time is occupied in examining papers. He often has a clerk travelling with him to whom he dictates letters, for railway work cannot be shelved without causing endless confusion. When his journey ends,

he may have several cases to investigate, twenty or thirty witnesses to question and cross-question. Their replies will be taken down by a shorthand clerk, and if it should be a complicated case he will take the papers and go through them all with the impartiality of a judge. It is surprising what a variety of cases come before his notice in the course of a year. Besides ordinary cases of negligence and insubordination, he will have to deal with such charges as one expects to hear in a police court. Cases of drunkenness, fighting, forgery, embezzlement, and even seduction are brought before him; and he acts as judge of a sort of 'Court of First Instance.' Some of them he will deal with entirely by himself, others will be sent up to the Board of Directors, and some will already be in the hands of a court of justice.

The other executive officers have the appointing of the servants under them, and have also similar experience to the above; but the superintendent has so many different classes of men under him that his experience is far more varied than all the others put together. Railway life is so little written about, and is so imperfectly known by railway men themselves, except in the particular grade in which they are serving, that the life of a superintendent who has risen from the ranks would be a work of inestimable interest to the whole railway world. Most of them have had experience in the humbler

grades of the service, for the position of superintendent demands thorough knowledge of every branch of railway work. It is one of the blue ribbons of the service, and the holder of the position can rest satisfied that it was earned before it was gained.

THE SECRETARY.

This gentleman is the official representative of the company. He is the company in all actions at law, and his name appears on all drays, carts, &c., where the law requires that the owner's name shall appear. His position is generally considered as next to the general manager. All matters relating to railway stock and dividends are dealt with in his office, and he is the directors' right-hand man in all financial matters. He has nothing whatever to do with the working of a railway, and his duties are those common to secretaries of other large commercial companies. As there is a lot of work of a private nature done in his office, the clerical staff are generally picked men, and when the post becomes vacant it is invariably offered to men who have held the appointment on another railway, or to the senior clerk in the same office. There is so much financial knowledge and training required for the post, that a competent railway man in every other respect would be very much at sea in this work.

GENERAL MANAGER.

The position of general manager on a railway is the highest in the service; but before any man attains it, he will have had many years' experience of common every-day railway work, and will in all probability have attained his meridian of life. There is a tendency now in all walks of life to give important offices to younger men than was the custom in times gone by, if we except two notable exceptions in the political world. Younger men now are made judges and bishops, and younger men play a more important part in the nation's affairs than has been customary. So within the last few years younger men have been appointed to fill the executive offices of our railways.

With all its cares and anxieties railway life does not seem detrimental to prolonged life, and the majority of the executive officers of our important railways are men whose age borders on or exceeds seventy years.

One of the chief duties of a general manager is to watch railway bills through parliament, and to have every item of information regarding them at his finger ends. He must be prepared with a strong case in their favour, as his evidence is of great weight before the different committees which they have to pass.

Jealousy, which is a fault not uncommon amongst generals, does sometimes exist in the upper grades of the railway service, and each officer is quick to put his foot down on any interference from his equal in another department. The general manager has these differences to settle, and his power is such that no single individual can override his ruling. He is head over all, and only an order from the Board of Directors can supersede his decisions. He is responsible to the directors for the whole management of the line, and it goes without saying that he has great influence in all appointments of any importance. The *esprit de corps* of the whole service depends very much on the character of this official. Grievances, when they affect all the members of any particular class of railway servants, are laid before him, and he will often meet deputations of the men, with a view of hearing thoroughly their complaints. How he receives them, and what he has said is soon known up and down the line, and whether he is a man for the servants or the company is soon decided by the rank and file. The active management of a railway is chiefly in the hands of the superintendent of the line and the goods manager; but the general manager exercises a controlling influence on all the work, and if he is a thorough railway man, the line he represents is sure to feel that influence.

THE DIRECTORS.

The directors of a railway are nominated and appointed by the shareholders, but in case of a vacancy occurring on the Board, they generally have a fit person to nominate for the vacant seat, and the shareholders are asked to appoint him. This is generally done without any trouble, but some companies' Board meetings are famous for their noisy strife and opposition to all the proposals emanating from the directors, and at such meetings these gentlemen have a very hot time of it, but they invariably carry the day at the finish. To qualify for the post each director has to hold a certain amount of stock of the railway he is to represent, and he is besides generally a man of some influence and position. They receive a small salary for their services, and have several privileges which are worth having. The most valuable, perhaps, is the gold pass which allows of them travelling when, where, and how they like. On their own line they can order any train to stop at a station for their convenience, and compartments are invariably reserved for them whenever they travel. They also have the privilege of travelling on most lines throughout the kingdom free, but have no power to interfere with the working of the trains except on their own line.

A saloon carriage very similar to a tramcar, with a

platform at each end, and well furnished and upholstered, and attached to an engine, may sometimes be seen at or passing through a station; this is the directors' saloon in which they travel about the line inspecting the various stations and works in progress with as much comfort as royalty itself could. Some of the executive officers will be with them on these occasions, to give any information that they may require. Board meetings take place about once a fortnight; but the whole body of directors are divided into small committees for the purpose of dealing specially with any part of the working or administration of the line. Each committee has its name, such as Train Committee, which will deal with the whole service of train running, and there may be Locomotive, Finance, and Expenditure Committees. They meet as occasion requires, and their reports are considered by the full board. In times past the directors were generally chosen from amongst the aristocracy or landed gentry, but now men of more practical knowledge find seats on a railway Board of Directors.

In the old days when illegible writing was considered a sure sign of education and good birth, a farm labourer applied to his master, who was a director on a certain railway, to assist him to get into the service. His master wrote him a letter to take to headquarters for that purpose. The letter was presented, but not a soul could decipher it. The

director had in the meantime gone abroad for a few months, and nothing could be done for the man, who had to take the letter back with him, till his master returned. When he did so, the letter was shown him, and he was told that no one at headquarters could read it. He opened it, and after looking at it himself some time seemed equally puzzled, and admitted that he could not read it himself. He got fresh particulars as to what the man wanted, and wrote again with a better result. Such a case as this is rare in our days.

All permanent servants have to go before the Board to be appointed to their several positions on entering the service, and this is called 'passing the Board;' and it is generally understood by railway servants that this gives them a right to appeal to the Board in all cases where they think they are unjustly treated, by being dismissed or otherwise severely punished. It is the great court of appeal for railway men, and its decisions are final.

In no public service are the interests of the servants better managed or more generously treated than they are by the directors of our railways, who even in times when dividends are small do not reduce the sums generally put down to the Superannuation, Railway Benevolent, and other funds; nor are the moral or social interests of their servants forgotten where they exist in very large numbers.

THE STOREKEEPER.

The storekeeper is another railway official who is unknown to the public even by name. He is the responsible head of the department which supplies the various stations with furniture, fireirons, carpets, and the general fittings of waiting-rooms and offices, and such domestic articles as soap, brushes, dusters, &c.; and when one considers the wants of two or three hundred stations in this respect, it can be easily imagined that the stores department of our railways is a very large concern. Nor are these the only things supplied from this source. Fog-signals by the thousand gross are yearly received there to be despatched all over the line. Oil by hundreds of casks is dealt with in the same way; and the premises over which this official presides gives one an idea that the railway provider must be a man whose knowledge of prices and quality must be very accurate, before a railway company would have his warehouses filled with such an immense amount of various articles. The storekeeper is a buyer, not a seller, and he is invariably a man of great experience and judgment of the various markets. But perhaps the most important item that he has to deal with is coal, and the cost of this commodity is enormous to all railway companies. Some companies have coal-mines of their own, others take the entire output of two or three pits for their own consumption; but

in any case the supply of coal has to be arranged for on the best terms, and the storekeeper is responsible for this being done.

Stations apply for their stores generally once a month, and a large staff of clerks and porters are busy for a couple of weeks in making up parcels and packages to be sent away. An invoice is sent to every station, and the station-master's receipt is the voucher enabling the storekeeper to account for the disposal of his stores. On some railways this official also deals with the clothing supplied to the uniform men. The garments are not made by the company, but by clothing contractors, who get all the particulars of measurement from this department. The cut, fit, and finish of the uniforms supplied leaves much to be desired, and are not such as to make the men proud of wearing them. The cases of misfit are numerous, and cause a lot of unnecessary work in having the things sent backwards and forwards for alteration. A thin man will occasionally receive a suit that might have been made for honest Jack Falstaff, and the stout man will burst the seams of his coat in simply trying it on. Stock-taking in the stores department takes place twice a year, and this is very necessary, seeing that it is one of the great spending departments of a railway. By some people the storekeeper might not be considered a railway official, seeing that he has nothing whatever to do with the working of the railway; but

though this may be the case, he requires to have an extensive knowledge of railway requirements, and therefore he holds a position that cannot very well be overlooked in a work dealing with railway men generally.

Redhill Tunnel.

CHAPTER II.

RAILWAY STATIONS.

THE general improvement in railway stations has hardly kept pace with the speed and safety of the trains, or with the enhanced comfort of railway carriages. In many instances the stations have been vastly improved, and can take rank as architectural adornments of a town; but many of them still show the same primitive nakedness as they did on the day when they first saw the light, thirty or forty years ago. Birmingham, York, and Preston may well be proud of their stations, for they are the finest structures of the kind in the world, and are hardly likely to be surpassed. York Station has been called 'The North-Eastern Folly;' and if spending more money by thousands over a building than is actually required, and simply for show, can be called folly, the new name is not misapplied. The chief considerations in building a railway station are—that it shall afford every convenience to the travelling public; that the offices shall be where they are

mostly required; that the different platforms shall be easy to get at; and that the passengers can get from one place to another with ordinary intelligence.

Although the South London lines cannot boast such fine buildings as those that run to the north, their average degree of respectability will be equal, if not greater. No railway in the south having the same traffic can show such a miserable apology for a station as there is at St Dunstan's Junction, in Yorkshire, on the Great Northern Railway; nor can any town in the south having a population of ten thousand feel that it is worse off than Bingley, on the Midland main line, near Bradford.

With the vast populations that there are in Lancashire and Yorkshire, the accommodation in these districts can only be called wretched—that is, when the large towns are excepted. The Midland Company have begun to improve their smaller stations in the West Riding, and Keighley and Shipley are model stations in their way. The former is one of the best arranged in the country, and should serve as a model for many more. St Pancras is too large, and at times appears a wilderness. Paddington and King's Cross always seem busy, though they lack the grandeur of the former. The Exchange Station, Manchester, is another of those stations that seem to have been built for show. It may do very well for local traffic from Manchester,

but what about passengers arriving at Victoria and wanting to catch a train from the Exchange? The walk from one to the other under cover certainly is one of those arrangements not conducive to the good temper or comfort of the public, nor one to make them think highly of the wisdom of railway directors. It is a curiosity; and it is to be hoped that it will remain unique. If Mr Ruskin should ever go that way, the public will doubtless be treated to such a description of it as he only can give, for it beggars the pen of an ordinary mortal.

Junction stations have certainly improved within the last ten years, and well they might, for some of them have been a maze to folks not used to travelling; and to this day, and probably to the end of time, junctions will be counted amongst the nuisances of railway travelling. Clapham Junction is the busiest junction in the world, as far as number of trains passing through it is concerned; but it is not so interesting to the casual observer as Rugby, Crewe, Derby, York, and Carlisle. These may be called long-distance junctions; and when important trains arrive, the life and bustle are most interesting to watch. Passengers' luggage plays a very important part in the every-day work at these stations; and the labels will often show that the owners have gone pretty nearly round the world. Genuine travellers these; but they are seldom seen at Clapham Junction, as that station is almost

entirely a local one, and the passengers alighting at it are largely made up of business people going backwards and forwards between their residences and places of business. The same may be said of Finsbury Park and Willesden Junction.

Railway stations have their ups and downs as well as ordinary mortals. To-day a certain station may be proud of its position as a terminus; to-morrow it is decided to extend the line, and in a short time it will dwindle to a roadside station; or it may be decided that it shall be a junction, when its importance will be greatly increased. Knottingley, between Doncaster and Wakefield, on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, was once a very important junction, and all the Great Northern trains for the north used to pass through it; but the West Riding line took away one-half of this traffic, and the line to Selby the other half, and the Great Northern is now represented there by two or three trains a day. Building and rebuilding stations is a very heavy item of expenditure, and one not to be indulged in lightly; but there is a case on record where a runaway train knocked down a station that was in sad need of being rebuilt, much to the joy of the inhabitants of the town, who had come to the conclusion that only such a catastrophe could bring about the desired end; and it did.

But with all their faults, the railways of this

country are immeasurably ahead of those on the Continent, and, save on a few points, are to be preferred to the colossal concerns on the American continent. The system of railway travelling in America may suit the Americans, but it is hardly likely ever to be copied throughout in this country.

Railway stations are used now by the public for other purposes than travelling. The bookstall is an attraction to many people; and the refreshment room is well patronised by young men whose thoughts are not on travelling bent. The fire in the general waiting-room often gives warmth to those who have not the means to provide even a few coals for their own desolate hearth.

But the most important use of a station, after travelling purposes are concerned, is that of a meeting-place. Every class of people make appointments at railway stations, and there conduct their business 'on the cheap;' and not business only, for more than one of our London termini might well be called 'The Lovers' Trysting-place.' Any observer can see this at both Charing Cross and Victoria Stations. Some of these people may be going by train; but there is no doubt that a vast number of people use the comfort of a railway station without helping in any way towards the expenses incurred by the companies in providing this accommodation. These are some of the public privileges of our British railways denied on foreign lines,

and so long as they are not abused, they are not likely to be withdrawn.

Fifty years ago refreshment rooms were the only sign of trade being carried on at a railway station; but food for the body was soon found to be insufficient, and Messrs W. H. Smith & Sons and others catered for the mind. Now there is a tendency to extend the shopkeeping business at our large stations; and if it should ever be necessary for railway companies to look about for means of raising a dividend, the rent-roll from shops on station platforms would be an acceptable departure from their orthodox business of general carriers.

There are some stations which have an importance attached to them far beyond their traffic-earning capacity. Windsor, Wolferton, Esher, and Chislehurst are some of these. No station in the world has been visited by so many celebrities during the last fifty years as Windsor, on the Great Western Railway. Sovereigns from every quarter of the globe, distinguished statesmen, officers, savants, poets, and travellers of all nationalities, have arrived at this station to visit England's Queen; and if a record had been kept, the list would for many reasons be an interesting one.

Wolferton, on the Great Eastern Railway, is the station used by the Prince of Wales, and its importance and most of its revenue is owing to this fact. Esher and Chislehurst are interesting

stations in so far that they were once used by two exiled French monarchs, Louis-Philippe, who resided at Claremont House, and Napoleon III., who resided and died at Chislehurst.

In years to come, railway stations may play a part in the history of our country; but whether they do or not, one thing is certain, and that is, that such places are mixed up in the daily life of most of us, and are the stages whereon many a drama of human life is played in reality. Joy and sorrow, love-scenes and tragedies, have been witnessed on that public stage the station platform.

A Railway Junction at Night.

CHAPTER III.

STATION-MASTERS.

THERE is an instance where a man out of employment called on a certain station-master and asked him who he was to apply to, as he wanted the position of station-master. He was told that such appointments were made from men who had been years in the service, and consequently had experience of railways. He replied that as far as experience went, he thought he had had enough, as he had been watching station-masters for the last twenty years, and he could do anything that he had seen them do, and in some cases he could have done much better himself. This, I daresay, is the opinion of many men, but it is a wrong one. The position cannot be attained in a day, however much a station-master may be watched. The average number of years a man will be in the service before he attains this rank is about twelve, and during that time he fits himself for the position by practical experience. But though the average number of years may be

twelve, it does not follow that when a man has served the company that time or a few years more, he is sure of being appointed a station-master. There are men, and many of them of great practical experience, who have been aiming at this position for twenty years, and have not reached it yet, and may never do so.

It is the same on railways as in the army, navy, and the professions: influence is almost a *sine qua non*, and though men of marked ability have risen by virtue of their own merit, still they are few and far between. Soldiers and sailors cannot all be generals and admirals, even though their ability warranted it, nor can every railway servant be a general manager. Luck is a factor with railway men, and he is fortunate who has more than his share of it. Simple though the duties of a station-master may appear, only years of experience can make him equal to his work. He has to give orders and decide points which, without experience, he could not do. The ability to cope with his work has grown with him, and it is seldom that he proves incompetent in this respect. His years of service, whether as porter, guard, or clerk, have been his apprenticeship. There may be a few cases here and there where a man has been put in this office without much training; but in what branch of life are not incompetent men promoted for family or other reasons? Nepotism is not peculiar to railways. It

is often very galling for an old servant to see a youth placed over him; but has it ever proved profitable to rebel against such appointments? To grin and bear it is the best thing to be done under the circumstances.

Into the ears of station-masters are poured all the grievances of railway travellers, and they are many. He has to bear the best part of the insult levelled at the company which he has the honour to serve, and he is supposed to find an immediate remedy for all the various misfortunes which the travelling public are heir to. Porters and guards may be the first to hear of their troubles, but when their wrath waxes strong, they are soothingly told to see the station-master. This gives them hope, but they have not been in his presence many minutes before they find out that he is unable to assist them. Then they say unkind things, and vow that not another copper of theirs shall go to swell the receipts of that particular company.

Railways, like many other corporations, have no bodies to be kicked or souls to be saved, and in the eyes of some have been looked upon as fair game to swindle as well as abuse. The latter can be borne, but even railways show fight when their pocket is touched; and were it not for the sharp justice dealt out at police courts, investments in this sort of stock would be about as lucrative as those in South American or Turkish bonds.

Station-masters are generally divided into three classes according to the rank of the station; but even then there is a great difference in the position of men belonging to the same class, so that six classes would show better their relative position. All the London termini are first-class stations. The large provincial towns are also of the same rank; so are stations like Grantham, Rugby, and Sowerby Bridge, yet there is a great difference in the position of the station-masters of these stations.

From one of the highest to the lowest there is a very wide gap. Take Birmingham as one of the former, and Damems in Yorkshire as one of the latter. He of Damems is station-master, signalman, porter, and booking-clerk all in one; and the offices and waiting-rooms used to consist of one large hut resembling a bathing-machine, which might be carried away any time by two or three angry passengers. Yet the official here holds the rank of station-master, and can rub shoulders with his swell *confrère* at Birmingham; and he has this advantage over him, that he knows when his orders are executed, and when his work is done. At large stations there is often a deputy or assistant station-master, who of course will have all the hard work to do; while his superior looks on and walks the platform very much as a captain walks his quarter-deck. The deputy will give all orders, having first received them from his chief, and in the latter's absence takes

full charge of the station. The station-master is the responsible head of every station. Booking-offices, parcels, luggage, and telegraph offices, refreshment rooms and lavatories, and cab-stands on the premises, are all under his control as far as discipline is concerned, and every servant of the company at the station is under his orders. He has no power to dismiss any one, but can suspend them, which means that they must there and then cease work, and the case is laid before the superintendent. A fine or dismissal is the probable result.

Suspension is therefore the great deterring power in a station-master's hands. During the time that this edict is in force the man's pay ceases, so that if he is reinstated without a fine, he loses a considerable sum. To the general public the station-master at large stations is unknown, and it cannot be said that his life is the common one belonging to this class. We must go to smaller stations, where he is to be seen daily and at all hours attending personally to the trains as they come and go. He may be proud or affable, liked or disliked; but in either case he is known, and to him travellers must go in cases of dispute, or when misfortune of any sort overtakes them while on the company's premises. A person meeting with an accident, or a passenger being taken suddenly ill at his station, are in his charge, and he generally does his best for them.

If there is a drunken row in a carriage, the guard

appeals to him, and he decides on measures necessary for peace and quietness. At stations contiguous to a racecourse he is often a marked man by the swell mob, who are in the habit of travelling without paying their fares, and are up to all dodges in the way of hiding and making excuses for travelling without a ticket. Should they see him on the course he will fare badly, but he generally comes to the conclusion that discretion is the better part of valour, and therefore absents himself from their company when he can.

A passenger is over-carried—a very common occurrence even amongst regular travellers—he hears the case, and decides whether the fare is to be paid or the passenger shall be sent back free, and it is not always easy to decide rightly in these cases. Or some old lady has lost all her luggage, declares she saw it at such a station, that it was fully addressed and properly labelled, and insists on it being forthcoming the same night, or the law will be put in motion to make the company pay heavily for their negligence. The station-master will do his best in the interest of the company and of the passenger to get the luggage back. Telegrams will be sent to all likely places, and the different guards questioned. It does not turn up that night, so the morrow morning sees the old lady at the station in a towering passion, venting her anger on the station-master, who she declares has

not done his best in her behalf. It will ultimately turn out that her luggage is at the station from which she departed, neither labelled nor addressed, and she will probably declare that the label and address have been wilfully torn off.

At junctions his greatest trouble is to decide whether connections are to be maintained when trains are running late. He may have certain instructions, but they do not cover all contingencies, and his decision may not always meet the approval of his superintendent. He will then get a letter from headquarters which will say just enough to upset him for the day, and everything will appear to go wrong for a while, for troubles do not come singly even on a railway. Besides his own mistakes, he is responsible for those of his staff. A stupid booking-clerk, who cannot or will not book passengers by right routes, an impudent porter who has unknowingly insulted some big-wig, will cause him to receive more cutting letters from his superiors; and if he is a sensitive man he will feel these rebukes; but, as a rule, his skin is pretty thick, and thick it will have to be if he intends to enjoy life under the usual conditions of the service.

His time is never his own, theoretically, for he is not supposed to leave his station without leave; and then a competent man has to take his place, and is sometimes sent down from headquarters,

although his absence is only a matter of a few hours. At small roadside stations he will have to ask to go and have his hair cut, and it is surprising how rapidly the hair grows at these places, judging from the number of times it requires cutting. Even during the hours usually devoted to sleep, he may be summoned to rise from his warm bed with the cry of 'Up goods off the road at Rolten Siding; both lines blocked, sir.' He will then have to sally forth and make the best arrangements he can till the break-down gang appears. This may involve him being up all night and riding backwards and forwards with every train whatever the weather. This sort of thing has taken place three times in one week; and when it is borne in mind that his wages cover all these extra duties, it cannot be said that his office is a sinecure. As a rule he is not a grumbler, and lives and works in the hope of promotion—a hope that is often deferred, and has often made his heart sick. Yet with all the petty annoyances he may have to suffer from the public, and the disagreeable letters he may get from headquarters, the life of a station-master is a pleasant one.

The peculiar excitement which most people feel who are travelling for pleasure is unknown to him, as the railway is always to him the land of labour; but their outgoings and incomings are a source of daily interest to him; and if he cares to

study the phases of human life or character as depicted in the human countenance, he has on his platform unlimited chances to do so.

Strange faces pass him hourly, faces that linger in his memory for days together, and others that are no sooner seen than they are forgotten. To-day a wedding party may occupy his mind, to-morrow may see his platform filled with mourners. Picnics, school-parties, partings and meetings of children with their parents, are ever engaging his attention, and the mutability of life is ever being brought to his notice. His life is a kaleidoscope, and no two days are the same. His life cannot therefore be called monotonous. He is disagreeable at times, as are all specimens of mankind, and he is often abused for the curt way in which he replies to questions. Where this results from a bad disposition he deserves it, but in most cases this is not the cause. He may have several things to do which must take his whole attention, and were he to enter into conversation with every questioner, or answer them pleasantly, which generally leads to the same thing, his work would be neglected; and to avoid this he gives short answers, and leaves his questioner abruptly. Some people will feel offended at his manner, but it is none the less very necessary at times. When, however, he has time on his hands, he enjoys a chat with old and young as well as anybody.

When there is a house on the station, the station-master lives there rent free, and is allowed coals and gas. Some companies, however, charge a nominal rent for the house. The house is invariably more valuable than it is assessed at to him. They are generally well built, and fairly comfortable, and are better or worse according to the class of the station. In their outward appearance there is a great sameness, and in very few of them is there any pretence to architectural beauty. Plain and solid will describe most of them on the northern lines; but in the south and west there are some bijou residences with beautiful surroundings, though the chances are that the salaries in these will be very small. The good positions for station-masters are in the towns and districts where money is made, and where he will have to work, and where he has little time to think of the beauty or ugliness of his residence. It is the same with their gardens; how many are there worth calling such in the West Riding of Yorkshire? But in the southern counties there are gardens attached to the houses that any man might be proud of. A few poles of embankment near the house is generally all the garden which a station-master pretends to cultivate on the lines running north. The directors of most of the southern lines give prizes for horticulture at their stations, and this is a great inducement to station-masters to improve on their beauty. The northern

lines reap their harvest from goods traffic, and therefore cannot humour the whims and fancies of their passenger customers.

During the last fifteen years many of the companies divide the passenger and goods traffic at their large stations; where this is done the head of the goods department is called a 'goods agent,' and he deals entirely with that branch of traffic. His work consists chiefly of waiting on customers for the purpose of settling claims, going into disputed points, and inducing the said customers to patronise his particular railway before all others. A goods agent in a town where there are two or more railways requires an immense amount of tact, good temper, and patience; three things not often found in one man. If he possesses these he is worth a good salary, but every man on a railway is not paid according to his merit. If a very small commission was paid to these men for all traffic above a certain figure at competitive stations, the best men for the post would reap a harvest themselves, and prove golden eggs for the companies employing them.

Station-masters are eligible for the post of district superintendent, but vacancies of this description seldom occur. Most of our colonial railways are managed by men who have had experience on the English lines; and appointments, such as general manager, superintendent, and accountant on colonial

lines, are generally given into the hands of the English companies in turns to fill; and experienced station-masters fall in for a share of these appointments.

It has been noticed that up to the present time no man of genius in literature or the fine arts has graced the railway service, nor has a subject connected with that service been made a theme of by any author or artist of note, if we except Frith's picture of a railway station. Men of almost all occupations have risen to be intellectual beacons to the civilised world; but the toilers on our railways are not represented amongst the illustrious in literature and art. The nearest approach to a genius that the railway world can boast of is Patrick Brontë, the wild wayward brother of Charlotte Brontë, the authoress of *Jane Eyre*, and her two sisters who wrote works that have stood the test of time. He was station-master for a short time at a small place near Halifax, but his work was uncongenial to him, and he had eventually to relinquish his post. That he had genius cannot be denied, but he has left little to show that it existed. But he was once one of us, and with all his faults we can be proud of his connection with a service that kicks against sentiment, and cannot grasp the airy spirit that dominates the poet's soul.

But if railway men have not shone in the paths of literature and the fine arts, they have in those

more practical ways of life called by the general name of business. Their training fits them either for commercial life or for posts of responsibility in places where tact, honesty, and management are required. Railway work, except in the higher spheres, is only poorly paid for; and men who leave the service to take up other occupations invariably get on well. The majority, however, having made their bed on the scanty earnings of this or that line, elect to sleep on it till they are moved to a sphere where the sound of the engine is not known, and where there is but one station, which is wrapped in an eternal silence, and where the only change is corruption.

A Roadside Station.

CHAPTER IV.

INSPECTORS.

THE station inspector is only seen at large or busy stations; and where he is employed his presence on the platform is as regular as the departure and arrival of the trains themselves. He is better known to the travelling public than most station-masters, as his duties are chiefly those of getting passengers seated, superintending the loading of their luggage, the attaching or detaching of vehicles, and getting the trains away to time. He arranges the duties of the porters, and he is responsible for the general outdoor working of the station in the station-master's absence. Where there are night mail and other important trains to attend to, a night inspector is in charge, and he reports to his chief all matters of importance that have occurred during the time he has been on duty. There are, however, other inspectors with whom the public are not familiar. They are in uniform certainly, but it is often a very plain one, and the wearers do not add to its official

character by habitually wearing the ordinary hard felt hat. The Midland Company have a very large staff of inspectors representing all departments; this is accounted for by the fact that all matters are dealt with from headquarters direct, and these inspectors are employed in making inquiries into irregularities and getting information for their chiefs, and also in seeing that orders are carried out. But most railways in this country being divided into districts with local superintendents, the work is decentralised, and a much smaller staff of inspectors is consequently required. In this case two or three travelling inspectors only are employed in each district.

Every railway has its rolling-stock inspector. These officials are responsible for providing vehicles of all descriptions as they are required; and in the busy excursion season they are often at their wits' end to find sufficient carriages for the traffic. Race meetings give them the same trouble in connection with the supply of horse-boxes; and even with ordinary goods-wagons a busy week in the grain or potatoe traffic taxes their resources to the utmost. Very few railway companies have sufficient rolling stock to meet exceptional requirements, and the position of rolling-stock inspector is therefore a very anxious one.

The lamp and signal inspector is another important post on our railways. The ordinary traveller

may not think that lamps require much attention, but when it is borne in mind that every lamp is a signal, the proper burning of which is of the utmost importance, the necessity of these articles being properly looked after is apparent. In every case where a lamp goes out or fails to burn, a report has to be made, and it is sent to this official for inspection. The working of the various signals occasionally gets out of order: this has to be looked into, and the why and wherefore found out. Thoroughness is the motto of railway working, and it is this principle which has brought the railways of this country to their present state of perfection; and no men in the service have had more to do with this satisfactory result than the inspectors, whose experience has been gained by a long apprenticeship of hard work. They are all picked men and old servants, and their opinion on railway working should have that attention which it does not always get.

CHAPTER V.

TICKET COLLECTORS.

THE ticket collector is not a favourite with the public. His 'Tickets, please,' or the bare exclamation 'Tickets!' in a voice of authority and sometimes in a tone of rudeness, often causes unpleasant scenes between him and the constant traveller; and makes nervous passengers excited and uncomfortable in cases where they have lost or misplaced their tickets. He is too apt to look upon the passenger without a ticket as an individual bent on defrauding the company. The new hands are the chief offenders in this respect, but experience improves them; though their duties are such that, even if carried out in the most civil way, they will still ruffle the tempers of some passengers. Ticket collectors know that there are clever swindlers on the road, and are naturally suspicious if there is anything irregular or peculiar about a passenger's ticket. The director who showed his gold pass, which was a pendant to his chain, and was told to 'pay up, as passengers on this line don't travel with medals,' was probably not aware that very few

railway men have had the opportunity to see and examine this talisman. The book pass held by government railway inspectors is another form of pass very seldom seen. It gives the holder permission to travel by any passenger or goods train, or on any light engine, and is signed by the general managers of the various railways. Now the ticket collector new to his business might be excused if he were to look suspiciously on the holders of these passes, but if they happen to be sensitive individuals overflowing with dignity, hesitation in passing them may end in a result very disheartening to the ticket collector. Stations are avoided by defrauders where the ticket collectors are known to be sharp and uncompromising in their duties.

There is a great temptation for these men to be dishonest, as they are constantly receiving money as excess fares, and there is no absolute check on these receipts; but where there is the slightest cause for suspicion, they are not only watched, but a detective rigged up as a navvy, a homeward-bound sailor, or other innocent-looking character, takes a ticket short of his destination, pays the difference at the collecting station, and if this amount is not duly accounted for, the collector is then and there dismissed. Other faults in this official are leniently dealt with, providing his honesty is indisputable. Youths who have started in the service as messengers and lad porters aim to attain the post of ticket collector; but as the

vacancies are few, only those who are sharp and bear a good character can hope to fill them. The duties are not arduous; but on account of the various sorts of tickets in use during the summer season requiring to be well understood by the ticket collectors, they have to be well up in the printed instructions issued every week. At all the important collecting stations only experienced men are employed.

Passengers often notice that at certain stations and junctions the ticket collector snips the ticket, but they do not always notice that besides a piece being snipped out, there is also a mark or number imprinted on the ticket. This is done to prevent the ticket being used twice, and also that the Railway Clearing-house may check the route for mileage division due to the various companies concerned. The collected tickets are sorted after each train, and are sent to headquarters daily with a return showing the numbers collected, or in some cases the numbers missing. After a short time they are reduced to pulp, and from the old material new tickets are made. For long journeys over several companies' lines, paper tickets filled in with writing are now generally used, and these tickets require more examining than the ordinary card ones. The ticket collector's is an active and interesting life, and few men care to change it when they have become familiar with its varied scenes.

CHAPTER VI.

BOOKING-CLERKS.

BAILWAY clerks have to pass an examination and appear before the Board of Directors before they receive an appointment. A certificate of birth and testimonials as to character are also required. They are then registered, and will have to wait till a vacancy occurs, which may be either in the goods or passenger department, and at any station along the line. The work of the clerical staff in the goods department is very similar to that in a merchant's office. There will be a chief clerk, perhaps a cashier, and invoice, abstract, and ledger clerks. Their hours are regular, and they are a steadier lot of men than their *confrères* in the passenger department, and as a rule they get married sooner. The two branches are rather inclined to hold aloof from one another. They seldom frequent the same haunts, and their tastes seem to differ in the matter of enjoyment. The clerical staff in the passenger department consists of book-

ing and parcels clerks; but, except at large stations, the latter have to take their turn in booking, so can be classed under the same head. Booking-clerks are drawn from all classes, and mystery enshrouds many of them. If they are elderly, the chances are that they have been in some other line of business and failed, and through a little influence have managed to get on the line. They can be seen at all ages, sizes, and heights. The six-feet-two-inches man will take his turn with a lad a trifle over four feet; and the thin delicate lad weighing seven stone will change duty with a man turning the scale at sixteen or seventeen stone. Some can show a pedigree that a Highlander might envy; and others—well, would rather not have theirs inquired into. Officers in the army who have met with reverses or misfortune have been known to accept the post of booking-clerk. One such was some years ago at a large station in the West Riding, and was recognised by an old private who had served under him, and who addressed him by his military rank. It was very galling to him that he should be recognised, and still more so that his fellow-clerks should know what he had intended keeping secret. Sons of officers, parsons, and doctors abound in the service; but they do not always take kindly to their work, and seldom rise to any position.

One station-master in Yorkshire had the mis-

fortune to have two young fellows of this class in his booking-office together. One of them spent his time in reading a Greek Testament and chewing tobacco; the other would not book the passengers, on the ground that he had been sent there to learn the work, not to do it. He was supposed to be some distant connection of a peer, and as such, thought it beneath his dignity to dole out twopence-halfpenny tickets. The clerks that had been sent to that station had all turned out badly for some time past, and the station-master got tired of reporting, as he feared that each new-comer would be worse than the one removed. Besides, constant reporting of the staff gets one into bad odour with the officials at headquarters. The aristocratic gentleman, however, left in time, and severed his connection with the railway.

The hours on duty of a booking-clerk are usually ten a day; but they are at very irregular times. This is on account of trains starting to run as early as 5 A.M. and continuing till midnight. There must be always some one to book the passengers; and as there are nineteen hours to cover, and in many cases only two clerks, they have to work as best they can that both may have time for their meals.

'The booking-clerk is late again,' is a remark often heard when the first train in the morning is due out and no one appears to book it. The

passengers begin to lose patience; but at the last minute the clerk is seen rushing to the office door, and in a few seconds the window is up, and the click of the stamping press is heard going at lightning speed. It is surprising how many people can be booked in a minute if they will but ask plainly for their ticket and tender the right fare. The clerk knows this, and gauges his time so nicely, that a minute or two is all he allows himself to send his customers on their way, not rejoicing, but grumbling at his delay in turning up. He has had no time for morning ablutions, and generally looks very seedy, and gets the discredit at once of being a dissipated creature. Old women are apt to lecture him if he is a young man; but they get a Roland for their Oliver, for the juvenile booking-clerk is not without impudence, and does not fear to indulge in it during the early hours of morning when no officials are about. After the first train has gone, and should there be a long interval before another is due, he will conclude his night's rest on the counter or table, and will condescend about 7 A.M. to perform his morning toilet. The country clerk having not even mild dissipation to keep him up at night, gets to bed in good time, and arrives at his work in the morning as most men should; but the booking-clerks in London and the large towns are fond of life; their very occupation has a tendency to make them want enjoyment. They have

assisted during the day in sending hundreds away on pleasure, and when night comes they go in for a little themselves. The juvenile booking-clerk is often very loud in his dress, at least when off duty, and even while booking, rings, chains, and studs are a prominent feature of his *tout ensemble*. There are exceptions, of course, to this remark, but most of the large offices can count one or two heavy swells amongst their number. They patronise theatres largely, having often the privilege of free tickets, and are great patrons of the music hall and other public concert-rooms. But age tones down their gaiety, as it does every class of men, and by the time a booking-clerk gets to be thirty, he is a more steady-going citizen, even though he is still a bachelor.

As before observed, the clerks in the goods department are married sooner than those of the booking-office. This is not for want of opportunities of knowing the fair sex, or from any backwardness on the part of the clerks. It may be that they have too many irons in the fire, and among them cannot make a choice. They are great admirers of the fair sex, and the latter seem to reciprocate this feeling. The booking-office window is often blocked in the evening with two or three young ladies anxious to know all about booking and the mysteries of the booking-office, which is supposed to be very private, as this word is generally painted in large

characters on the door. This little entertainment goes on till some old curmudgeon, tired of waiting, calls out: 'Now, young man, take those girls inside and do your courting there;' and the interview ends.

Booking-clerks are fairly good-tempered, and indeed they should be, for if any one wants a chance to see how cross-grained, obstinate, and despotic the travelling public often are, let him spend a day at a booking-office window, and he will soon see what a clerk has to put up with. At six o'clock in the morning, when all the cash is locked up and cannot be got at, a passenger will tender a sovereign for a ticket costing a few pence. The clerk has no change, and tells the passenger so, who will demand a ticket, which of course he does not get. He then threatens to report the matter to headquarters. Seeing the clerk still obdurate, he will start abusing him; and the chances are that hard words are bandied between them. The matter will probably be reported, and there it will end. A lady arriving at the station three-quarters of an hour before her train is due commences a violent rapping at the window, which for a time will be unheeded; but eventually, under pressure of the aural nerves, the window is opened, and the said lady will demand why the window was not opened at her first rap.

'There is no train, madame, for three-quarters of an hour,' replies the clerk.

'Give me my ticket at once, and I will tell the Colonel of your rudeness.'

Another report to answer in due time.

'You told me, young man, that if I went by the ten o'clock train and changed at D—— Junction, I should get to B—— at three o'clock; but I had to wait at the junction an hour, and did not get to B—— till five o'clock. I missed a most important appointment, and shall sue the company for your carelessness in giving me wrong information.'

'I gave you the information from the time-table, and I can do nothing else,' says the clerk.

'You seem to treat it in a very off-hand manner, and I shall therefore make a note of your indifference in my report,' replies the irate passenger; and another explanation will have to be given to head-quarters.

The clerk may be in the right in every instance; but these constant reports are unfortunate for him, as his name gets known in connection with these complaints; and when he does happen to be in the wrong, he gets dealt with more severely than he would were his name not so well remembered.

There are often letters in the papers complaining of the dishonesty of these clerks. That there are such characters among them their own body will be the first to admit; but the accusation is far too general. The dishonesty is not always on one side. If the clerk makes an error, either wilfully or

inadvertently, the passenger can make a complaint, and the books will be examined; but if the passenger tries to 'do' the clerk, and succeeds, what remedy has the latter when the train is gone? for mistakes are seldom found out till all is booked up. He does not write to the papers regarding the dishonesty of the public, but puts up with the loss, knowing that it was owing to his own carelessness. Many young men—in fact, it can be said that all of them—suffer losses in this way the first few months that they are in a booking-office; and where there is a heavy traffic and the fares are long, a slight error will often mean a serious loss. The work of a booking-clerk is to be quick and exact at issuing tickets and accurate in giving change; and this ability has to be learned. His whole mind must be on his work, and he should not indulge in talking to passengers, for then a mistake is easily made. When excursions to race-meetings are on, he must be particularly sharp, for he will have to deal with men who are up to every dodge in bewildering a man when he is giving change. Bad money is generally about at these times, so that he has to keep an extra lookout on every coin; and when it is known that he has to make good deficiencies on whatever account, and that his salary is small, it cannot be said that he has much favour shown him. Let him, however, be intent on swindling the public, it will not end there. He will try his luck on his fellow-

clerks, and for a time will succeed; but soon small amounts will not satisfy him; and at length suspicion is aroused, and all his transactions are marked; and there are means by which it can all be brought home to him. Dismissal will be his punishment, and for want of a character nothing but manual labour will be open to him as a means of livelihood.

There are stations on most lines that have a bad name through having clerks who have been proved dishonest, and the post of booking-clerk at such places is hard to fill. It takes years of good character to redeem the name of such a station.

Although female clerks are very common on the continental railways, they do not exist in this country. Only one has been known to hold the position of booking-clerk on an English railway, and she may be holding it yet. It is admitted that the fair sex make very good clerks as far as book-keeping and the routine work of an ordinary office is concerned; but in public offices they do not prove equal to the sterner sex. They stand too much on their dignity, and their duties are gone through with an air of condescension that ill befits a public servant.

Booking-clerks being generally cool customers, have very little fear of their superior officers. The superintendent, general manager, or the whole Board of Directors might walk into a booking-clerk's

office, and he would be very little concerned at their visit; but when a gentleman with a black case walks in about nine o'clock in the morning and demands his cash, he shows visible signs of being affected at the visit. This gentleman is the district auditor, and he has a habit of popping in when least expected. If the clerk's cash is not right or his books not properly kept, it will be a hot day for him. It is seldom that the cash does come out exactly right; and as the auditor comes expecting to find a rogue, a few pence one way or the other is quite enough to make him think he has found one.

Why they should be so overbearing and suspicious, it is hard to tell; but as their success in the auditing line is only visible by exposing dishonesty, they appear to show their anger more from a feeling of disappointment at not finding any than anything else. A good case of embezzlement which has tested their acumen to find out, has been known to give these gentlemen angelic smiles. But they are not all of this character, though most railway men will say that the majority are. It must be borne in mind that in the course of a year's auditing they find a great many cases against the clerks which approach very near the act of embezzling, besides many in which the clerks are eventually prosecuted and punished; and this fact may make them naturally suspicious, as men have gone wrong on whom they could once place implicit reliance. When,

therefore, this gentleman has done his work and retires for another six months, there is general rejoicing amongst the clerks.

The keeping up of the stock of tickets necessary at large stations is generally left to the senior clerk, and it has to be done very carefully, for there is sure to be a sharp reprimand if tickets to any station are allowed to run out. It would be difficult to approximate the value of all the tickets in an ordinary booking-office; but some idea may be formed when it is stated that the average number of tickets in an office will be between two and three hundred thousand, at fares ranging from one penny to three pounds or more. The numbers of the tickets as they stand every night at the time of closing the books are taken down, and the number taken the night before is subtracted from it, and the difference is carried out at the fare; this shows the day's earnings. Passengers often notice a mark on their tickets in black, blue, or red pencil, or sometimes a corner may be turned down. This is done when the numbers are taken, and the clerk can see at a glance if he has left any out; but there are different systems on different railways. Easy though the life of a booking-clerk may appear, he has work sufficient to do in the course of the day. Railway companies are not in the habit of paying more men than are required to do certain work; in fact, offices and stations are generally under-staffed,

and in some cases clerks have to work fourteen and sixteen hours a day when the monthly returns are due in. Care, however, sits lightly on the average railway clerk, and if he is not sensitive to the rebuffs that he is sure to get from all quarters, his life will be a fairly happy one. To be a station-master is generally the aim of the ordinary clerk, and in time the appointment may come; but he must have great faith in the French proverb which says, 'All things will come to the man who knows how to wait,' for wait he will certainly have to, and probably for a very indefinite period.

In the Booking Office.

CHAPTER VII.

PORTERS.

THE railway porter is a familiar personage to every one, and most of us have at times been able to appreciate his services. Go to a station when we may, whether there are trains about or not, we can generally find a porter somewhere, and very seldom do we find him idle. His duties are many and not always pleasant, and his hours of work are often very long; yet withal, his looks, with few exceptions, bespeak the contented man. Porters include several classes of men. There are goods porters, who do not often come in contact with the public; parcel porters; shunting, lamping, and carriage-washing porters; and platform porters. The last-mentioned are best known to the public, and their position amongst the body of porters is most envied. Their duties are more varied and interesting than those of the other classes; they see the public in their joys and sorrows; and on one and the self-same day may see christening, wedding, and funeral parties. They

also have the chance of increasing their weekly wages by a few gratuities. Though their duties all over the country may be similar, porters try to avoid certain stations as much as tramps do certain workhouses. These hard stations are invariably large ones, and their bad character generally comes from the hard discipline of some inspector or foreman, who would have been a model slave-driver had his lot been cast in some of our colonies in days gone by.

Portering may be said to be the first step in railway life; some may begin their career in the service in a higher sphere, but many who have started as porters now hold very high positions on the railways in this country and in the colonies. At large stations like the London termini, Liverpool, Manchester, &c., and such junctions as Crewe, York, and Rugby, the porter is hard worked. The perpetual moving about, shutting doors, loading and unloading vans, answering questions by the hundred a day, makes their work much harder than it appears to the casual observer; and most men after a time are glad to get to a good country station if there is no chance of a suitable promotion. The position of brakesman or goods-guard is generally offered to porters of some experience; but men who have been years at a country station, who have a cottage and garden, and a family into the bargain, are not over-eager to accept such a promotion. A few

shillings a week more will hardly compensate them for breaking up their homes; so that as a rule porters at country stations remain porters, and do not fare badly. In London and the large provincial towns it is unusual to see the same faces amongst this class of men for many years together, as it is from the large stations that men are made brakesmen and goods-guards, it not being often necessary for them to change their homes.

But let us look at the characters of railway porters. There are good, bad, and indifferent men amongst them, the same as in any other class of humanity, but the bad are in a decided minority. The lazy ones are soon spotted by their superior officers, and the uncivil will sooner or later be reported by the public; and in both cases their tenure of office will be short. The criminal calendar can show very few railway-men on its list, and those that are there are mostly thieves. In our travels we shall find that, in the matter of civility alone, porters are not all alike. At one station we may find the porter errs on the side of too much civility; at another he will be found disagreeable, or even rude; and at several stations the word indifferent will convey his character to one's mind. He has no interest in his work, and he therefore fails at it. The civil man soon finds out that his character is appreciated, that the longer he stops at a station the more friends he has, and that the

public always seek his services in preference to others less amiable. If porters would but remember that civility costs nothing, and is often well rewarded, there would be no cause for one being favoured more than another; and, irrespective of 'tips' and other favours, the civil and obliging man has that contented mind which is brought about by being at peace with all the world. The face reflects the man, and the happy face is approached by the timid, who would dispense with information if they had to seek it from a disagreeable-looking individual.

At one of the Leeds stations there is a man who has been a porter for many years; he attends in the booking lobby, and waits on passengers arriving by cabs, &c. He is an old favourite of constant travellers, and rumour says that he can retire any day on his past earnings. His little fortune has been made by civility; and there are probably many more all over the country that can say the same. It is certainly true that porters who are advanced in life get the lion's share of public favour; but they were young once, and have served an apprenticeship which has taught them something to their advantage.

The indifferent porter is the hardest to deal with. He has no interest in his work; he would be the same sort of man in whatever occupation he was engaged. His answer to most questions is, 'I

don't know,' and we might add, 'and don't want to know.' Whatever is put before him to do, he does, but not willingly; he is a sort of labour machine which won't go without making. No special fault can be found with him, so that he does not generally get into trouble; but for all that, such men are a source of annoyance to inspectors and foremen, who cannot always be at a man's back to see that he does his work; and who are not always sure that an important order will be executed when it is merely given. These sort of men do nothing without being told, and fill up their time with dawdling about, or playing with some such article as a knife or piece of string; when not even so much occupied, they sit down and muse over their hard life.

The uncivil porter is always in hot water: he is generally a sharp man at his work, and does it well; acts up to all orders, and is in every way but one a good servant. If he cannot be civil, he need not be rude or impudent, but his manner is just sufficient to make his questioner feel insulted. If he loses his temper, however, there is no doubt but that his language will be both rude and impudent, and he will then draw largely from the vocabulary of slang. But, as before remarked, this class of men soon have to move on. They will be sent from one station to another, so that they can have a fair trial, till the record against them is

so black that they are requested to leave the service, or maybe allowed the option of resigning.

All railway companies—with perhaps one exception, known to most railwaymen—are very particular about civility being shown to the public; but even that company has now improved in this respect, as well as in many others. A bald-headed director of this company was travelling with some strangers, and at one of the stations one of them asked the name of the place. A porter pointed to the name-board, remarking: 'Can't you read?' The director was somewhat vexed, but said nothing. At the next station, another of the passengers asked if they changed there for A——. 'Sit still, and don't bother; this ain't a junction,' the porter replied. The director, who was much surprised at the incivility of the porters, told the strangers who he was, and expressed regret that they had been so spoken to. 'I will see, however,' he said, 'if they will speak in the same way to me.' At the next station he put his head out of the window, but could get no one's attention till the train was moving off, when a porter came up and shouted to him: 'Keep your bald head in, old buffer, or you'll catch cold.' He fumed with rage; but the strangers seemed to enjoy his defeat. There was trouble at those three stations the next day; and three faces were seen no more on those platforms.

There is a minimum height for porters; hence

short men are not seen, neither are very tall men. There is, however, no regulation as to rotundity, but fat porters are scarce. Constant exercise, I should imagine, keeps the superfluous fat down.

The agricultural districts are the recruiting-grounds for porters; perhaps it would be more correct to say breeding-grounds, for no company has any official to do the recruiting. As a railway now runs within walking distance of every village throughout the country, men seeking employment on the railway soon find out all particulars necessary to get into the service. It is not unusual to come across half a dozen porters at our large stations, each plainly showing by his talk the county he comes from; and it would be highly interesting to get them together and hear their conversation with one another. Raw recruits from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Northumberland, Norfolk, Somersetshire, and Cornwall, on a London platform holding a serious conversation would lead a Londoner to think that he was verily amongst strangers. They must go wherever they are sent, and before they are appointed, must be examined by a doctor. All things then being satisfactory, they are supplied with their uniform and a book of rules and sent where they are wanted. The new hand can generally be told by the look of discomfort he cannot help showing in appearing in corduroy and brass buttons for the first time. It is surprising how

neat some porters can appear with one uniform a year, which includes two pairs of trousers; and equally surprising how slovenly some are before their clothes are three months old. It is very awkward for these latter individuals when their new uniform comes late. One of this class in the West Riding had to apply two or three times for his new clothes, which were overdue, but still they did not come. He knew that his garments were worse than seedy, and feared that they might fall to pieces; so, as a last resource, he wrote direct to the superintendent, telling him of his trouble, and adding, that should the uniform not come at once, he should have to adopt the charcoal system. A reply soon came back, asking for particulars of the charcoal system. The porter then replied, that as different parts of his body were becoming visible through his clothes, he intended rubbing them with charcoal for decency's sake. It is needless to say that the new things were soon sent.

Now, are railway porters as a body of men as well off as they would be in any other occupation for which they are fit? The answer must be 'Yes.' Four-fifths of them have been farm-labourers, labourers about towns, or men without a trade; and in such capacities they would seldom rise above the level of being able to keep body and soul together, whereas directly they join a railway they have regular wages and prospects of promotion.

What regular wages mean, only those know who have had employment for part of a year and have had to make shift for the remainder. Every porter must belong to a sick fund; and if he is not a member of one at the time he joins the service, he must belong to the one carried on by the company, so that in times of sickness he still draws enough money to keep himself. It is very necessary that this should be compulsory, for there are many men who are quite indifferent about sickness till it comes, and it would not do for great companies to hear that their servants were dying for the want of attendance and the necessaries of life.

As for promotion, it may be said of the porter, that the position of general manager is within his reach, as much as the bâton of a field-marshal is said to be within the grasp of a French soldier. Every man is allowed a short holiday in the year, and on most companies they are paid their wages during that time. They have free passes for their wives and family on these occasions. If they live away from a market town, passes are issued to their wives for the purpose of marketing. These are great considerations. All the railway companies may not be so generous; but the great lines certainly are. The conclusion that must be come to, then, is, that a man with no trade or definite occupation can do very much worse than become a railway porter, and that he can easily get that situation,

providing he can read and write and can get testimonials as to his character and respectability. With industry and ambition he then has a future before him, and that future will be his own making.

Station on the Metropolitan Railway.

CHAPTER VIII.

GUARDS.

THE railway guard is a survival of the past; he occupies under changed circumstances the same post as did the stage-coach guard of years gone by. Then he had charge of the passengers in the royal mail, or the more wearisome stage-coach; now he has the charge of the passengers who travel in hundreds by the express and slow trains. He was a popular servant in the past, and is far more so now. In those days of the easy-going coach, he could hold conversations by the hour with his passengers, could lunch or dine with them at different places, if they were so generous as to ask him—and this was not unusual—and was looked upon with a great amount of respect by the inhabitants of all the towns and villages through which he passed. He was generally the first to bring important news of all great events; and those people considered themselves favoured who were the first to hear from him such items of news as the birth of a royal prince, the death of

some celebrity, a declaration of war, or the result of some battle. His budget of news was ofttimes sold in advance, and his questioners then had to go away with their curiosity unsatisfied.

Now, the railway guard has little or no time for conversation. He is respected still, but the respect is shorn of the glamour that surrounded his predecessor of the old coach-days. He is seldom the first now to bring important news, as the telegraph outruns him. Yet, with all these drawbacks, he is more popular to-day, in the general meaning of the word, than ever the stage-coach guard was, and is without doubt the most popular of all railway servants with the travelling public. Besides his human freight, he will have mails, luggage, valuable parcels, horses and dogs under his care. There may be children given into his special charge with a lot of instructions as to their disposal. He has to be always on the lookout for special signals, and is supposed to walk the length of his train at every stopping station, so that he has plenty to do in his journey of a hundred or, it may be, four hundred miles a day.

The stage-coach was looked upon as lucky if it got from London to York without accident; but when there was a turn-over or collision, the guard generally escaped from injury. But though such a journey by rail may be performed thousands of times now without any accident, yet, should a collision occur, the

guard is almost sure to suffer. When one guard only is attached to a train, he rides in the rear van; but when there are two, one rides in the front, the other in the rear; and it is in these parts of a train where the sacrifice of human life is always greatest. Passenger-guards are men of experience, and many of them have had to work as brakesmen and goods-guards many years before they are appointed to a passenger-train. For express trains they are always picked men. The highest post in the rank of guards is conductor; but as these officials are only appointed to such trains as the through Scotch expresses and Continental trains, there are very few of them, and the post consequently only exists on a few of the lines.

As a body, railway guards are a fine lot of men, and can be seen to best advantage on the platforms of the London termini of the London and North-Western, Midland, Great Western, and Great Northern Railways, when their important trains are due out. As many as a dozen have been seen on the King's Cross platform at ten o'clock in the morning attending to the three or four express trains that are due out in about three-quarters of an hour. Their uniform varies on different lines; but perhaps that worn by the men of the London and North-Western Railway is most typical of a guard; at all events in nearly all pictures in which this servant is portrayed, he is in the London and North-Western

dress. It is quite distinct from any other class, which cannot be said of the uniform of this class of men on all our railways.

Constant travelling has been blamed for many of the ills which the present generation have to bear; yet guards are not a sickly class; and providing that they have fair constitutions and strong nerves when they start in this capacity, they seem to live a fair average number of years; and there are to-day many men travelling up and down who are over sixty. The complaints they suffer from are not mostly of the nervous order, as one would suppose, but such general complaints as rheumatics, bronchitis, and quinsies; and perhaps consumption might also be added; and this is not to be wondered at, considering the nature of their employment, which compels them to be out all weathers and at all times of the day and night. Although guards of express trains may be paid better than those running slow trains or working on branch lines, the latter are often more lucrative posts. This may be accounted for by the fact that people travelling on these trains live in the district, and are therefore oftener on the road, and become friendly with the guard by constantly seeing him. Christmas is, of course, a good season with most guards, but is specially so to the men running good local trains. Though the guards on some local trains and branches may only rank as second-class men, they are very loth to accept a

higher grade where they may have to travel in fields and pastures new, often very barren to them from a financial point of view.

They are as a class a most civil body of men, and are invariably specially attentive to the ladies. It goes without saying that the pretty ones get more than their share of attention; for guards are only mortal, and have the same admiration for a pretty face as the rest of mankind. They do, however, lose their patience sometimes, when a bevy of forty or fifty school-girls bent on mischief ask them the most ridiculous questions, and will get out of the train at every stopping station to see that their luggage is all right, and consequently delaying the train; or when, as a guard told us the other day of an elderly lady who was travelling from London about fifty miles down in a slow train, who would have all her luggage in the carriage with her—some seven or eight packages. She got into the compartment, and the guard placed everything where she wanted it. He then had to buy her some newspapers and a bun, for which she paid the exact sum. She gave him distinct instructions where she was going to, and told him she should want his assistance there. He promised to do all he could for her. At every station down, this lady had something to say to him, generally in the shape of a question regarding her luggage or destination. He was about tired of it, said nothing, but thought a lot. Arrived at the

station where she was going to alight, her head was out of the window, and she called lustily to him. He came, assisted her out, and then brought out her belongings and put them all together by her side. He expected a trifle for all his trouble; yet if she had simply thanked him he would have thought nothing more of it; but the good lady smiled on him and said: 'You are such a civil guard, that I am sorry the rules of the company will not let you accept a gratuity, and I do not think for one minute you would like to break the rule.' He blew his whistle before he could hear the end of her speech, and was thankful to see the last of her. He now wavers in his attention to elderly ladies. Newly-married and courting couples are his best friends. It is customary for the porters to tell the guard if a newly-married couple are joining his train, and there is not a guard throughout the country who will not do his level best for them. He has gone beyond rules and regulations for this purpose, and has often been fined; but this is one of the unwritten rules of the brotherhood; so, newly-married couples, don't forget your friend 'the guard' when journeying on your honeymoon. Courting-couples are soon detected by his experienced eye; and he will do a good turn for them occasionally; but of course he recognises the difference in the two cases.

If an accident should take place between stations, the whole responsibility of protecting his train and

preventing further injury to passengers and railway stock rests with him, and in such cases as this the guard soon shows of what metal he is made. The strong-nerved and cool man will go about his work with some method; but the nervous and excitable man will most probably fly about in such a manner that the passengers will think something more terrible has yet to come; and consequently, he only adds to the confusion. But the man is as he is made, and too much should not be expected of him in such trying times. He is not a general, nor even a captain; yet his duties under these circumstances require as much skill and tact as is expected from those officers when they are transporting troops. When, however, a train enters a station, it is under the control of the station-master or inspector in charge, and the responsibility is then taken from the guard.

Serious railway accidents are unpleasant reading but unfortunately they form a very important item in the life of a railway guard, and one wonders that after they have had practical experience of one, they should ever have the nerve to continue in that calling; but, like all great terrors, they are no sooner over than they are almost forgotten. It is the same with the peasants of Guatemala and the inhabitants around Vesuvius: the earthquakes may shatter their dwellings and destroy their villages, or the molten lava may bury their

houses, but as soon as all danger appears to be over, these catastrophes are forgotten, and the people build again; yet it is only a matter of time before they are again razed to the ground by the same awful forces.

The custom of offering liquor to guards while they are in charge of trains is one to be very much condemned; but many guards who are not total abstainers refuse this dangerous kindness. It is not the one glass that will hurt them; but they are offered many, and perhaps they do not like to refuse; and it may happen that just when they have had enough, some gentleman of standing and a good sort to the guards offers them another. They might offend him to refuse, so they accept, and they are fortunate if no harm comes of it. No; if passengers want to be generous to the guard, give him the value of the liquor in hard cash. It will do him more good, and he will at all times much prefer it. He cannot choose in what manner a douceur shall be given him; but try him, and he will be found to have sense enough to know what is best for him. If all guards refused these offers of liquor on the road, the custom of offering such a doubtful kindness would soon die out.

Guards often rise well in the service, as much through the influence of gentlemen of position as through their own merit. This is not said in a carping or unkind spirit; they may merit the pro-

motion, but the chances are that they would never have obtained it but for such influence; and the moral is, for each guard to so ingratiate himself in the good opinion of his influential passengers that they will assist him all they can when a word from them will insure his promotion. But on no account is he to neglect the ordinary passenger for this purpose. The guard has chances to improve his position which no other class of railway servant has, and he should make good use of them.

CHAPTER IX.

ENGINE-DRIVERS.

BEFORE a man can become an engine-driver he has to serve some years in the locomotive works of the company, where he learns all the parts and fittings of an engine; he is then eligible for the post of fireman. At this rank he may remain a long time; in fact, he is fortunate if he is made a driver in the course of three or four years. It will therefore be seen that an engine-driver is always a competent man. This is a rule, and, like all such, there is generally an exception to it; but there is only one to this, and the circumstances of the case made it necessary that incompetent men should be employed; but the exception is hardly likely to take place again. The Midland drivers' strike in 1887 compelled the company to fall back upon men who had not sufficient experience; but risky though this was, no serious accident resulted from it. Drivers are skilled men, and therefore their number is limited. Many of them on the different lines of the country could

supervise the building of an engine; and many of the locomotive superintendents have spent years on the footplate of an engine before they rose to their present high position.

A man on being appointed a driver will try his hand at first with a slow goods-train; and having shown himself competent and careful, he will then have charge of an express goods or slow passenger train; and the height of his ambition is generally attained when he is called upon to drive such trains as the Flying Scotsman, the Wild Irishman, or the Flying Dutchman. The general public has no idea what driving engines of these express trains means. It is no exaggeration to say that while the train is running the driver's whole life is in his work, and that he has no time to think of anything else but his engine and the signals ahead. An express train often travels at the rate of sixty miles an hour, and then signals will be passed about every four minutes, and it can readily be understood that an engine travelling at that high rate of speed will require constant attention. The strain on a man's mind working an engine a long distance without stopping is very great, and could not be endured for many hours together; besides, it would not be safe for an engine to travel more than one hundred and eighty miles without being examined, and that distance is about the maximum any engine runs on one journey. Two such journeys is a good day's work for both

man and engine. The average time on duty for the men is nine hours a day, beyond which they are paid overtime. When they are not running, their time is devoted to examining the engine. This is a very important duty; for should any accident or delay be caused through negligence on the part of the driver in not seeing that the machinery is in good working order, he will be severely fined, and probably reduced. This applies equally to the men in charge of goods and slow passenger trains; but as their speed is not high and they have constant stoppages, the liability of their engines getting out of order is not so great.

Engines are very much like racehorses—they have little tricks and peculiarities of their own, and require humouring; for this reason, every driver keeps to his own engine as much as possible. The express engines of most lines cost between three and four thousand pounds. Their working career depends very much upon the road they have to travel. Steep gradients play sad havoc with them, and will shorten their lives by two or three years. The speed of engines is regulated by time-tables; but there is such a thing as making up lost time. This depends on the driver. If he is of a cautious and steady turn of mind, he will act up to the time-table, and be late rather than travel beyond the authorised speed. There are many men, however, who delight in the speed of their engines, and who glory when

they have the chance of a little fast running. This can only be indulged in when trains are late and a long distance has to be run without stopping. As the question is often asked, 'Which is the fastest train in the world?' it would be well to give it here with the particulars. The honour belongs to the Great Northern Railway Company. Their train which leaves Grantham at 4.18 P.M. and runs through to London (King's Cross) without stopping, arriving there at 6.15 P.M., is the fastest train in the world, covering a distance of $105\frac{1}{4}$ miles in one hour fifty-seven minutes—averaging fifty-four miles an hour the entire distance. The speed of this train at certain places will exceed the rate of sixty miles an hour; but the passenger is unconscious of this unusual celerity, as the train oscillates very little.

Drivers have to stand all weathers, and with very little protection. In the summer they are sweltering in heat above and below; in winter the lower parts of their bodies are baked, and the upper parts are nearly frozen; but this they bear without much grumbling. The only weather they dread and do grumble at with just cause is the foggy and snowy weather; for to these two conditions of our climate can be debited the great majority of railway accidents. With all the care imaginable, drivers can never feel themselves safe in such weather till their work is done.

Behind the black and greasy faces of these men

there are brave hearts, and seldom do they forget their duty to the public in times of accident. Nine times out of ten they could leap from their engine without much injury in cases of collision; but nine times out of ten they don't, and stick to their post till they know they can do no good. The recorded cases of their bravery, and the narrow escapes from accident owing to it, give a very poor idea of the actual number of such cases.

On the Engine.

CHAPTER X.

RAILWAY SIGNALMEN.

THE public seldom come in contact with this class of men. They know them, however, from seeing them in their box, or more often looking out of their windows, intently gazing into all the carriages as they pass. The eye of the signalman gets so used to watching a train in motion that he can generally tell if there are any inspectors or other officers travelling in them; and should there be one, the fact is soon sent on ahead. The 'cute, officious, or disagreeable officials generally have a nickname, and the notice will then be telegraphed thus: 'Shark on the line.' 'Bear 11.15 hence.' 'Bull in rear carriage.' A certain signal inspector once, however, got into a box ahead before the message came, and while he was there it was being received, and being able to read the instrument, he took the message himself, which ran: 'Old Butterhead is about.' He then replied to it thus: 'And will be with you next up-train.' Arriving at the signal-box whence the

message was sent, he said : 'You see old Butterhead is here; and he fines you a shilling for using the telegraph instrument for other than company's business.'

Signalmen have to spend from eight to twelve hours in their boxes at a time, and are supposed never to leave it while on duty. Some of the country boxes are very cheerful, especially where the men are fond of flowers; for there is often plenty of room for two or three dozen pots of plants, and in the winter there is a fire burning night and day, so that with a little care they can be kept thriving till the spring. A table, a chair, a stool, and a fixed desk constitute the furniture of the place. A row of levers kept beautifully bright adds to the cheerfulness of the sparsely-furnished chamber. Telegraph instruments and dials showing whether the line is blocked or clear are decidedly ornaments. Here, then, lives the man so many hours a day; and in a busy place he must work hard. The pulling of some of the levers is no child's play; and when this part of his work is done a hundred and fifty times in eight, ten, or twelve hours, and all the trains have to be booked, besides signalling the trains forward, one can imagine that when his day's work is finished the signalman is tired out. I know one box which would not be considered a busy one, where at times the man on night duty has not had time to eat a meal without having to get up from it

constantly. During the day, in busy boxes there is a lad who does the telegraphing, but at night the signalman has to do it all himself.

There is a vast difference in the system of signalling to-day from that of twenty years ago; mechanical science has made such strides, that the whole business of signalling is done by machinery, worked by a man, but so interlocked that in some cases he could not cause an accident if he would. Carelessness and forgetfulness are the only causes of accidents now, so far as signalmen are concerned. But though they are assisted so much by every contrivance to ensure safety, yet the signalman should be a man of nerve, with a cool head and a steady hand, for, when an accident does take place, much depends upon his judgment whether the effect may be intensified. He then has to stop all trains, by using the telegraph; to inform his superior officers; and on their arrival, to act as a telegraph clerk. This may seem nothing; but with a train wrecked within sight, and groans of the injured within hearing, it requires an immense amount of coolness to do that work properly.

Knowing as they do their important and responsible position, they have banded themselves together in a very strong union, and of all classes of railway servants they are the most given to grumbling. They have received more consideration from their directors than any other class, and some

years back their discontent threatened to result in a strike. I believe the date was even fixed when they should all leave their work. But the executive of the different railways had foreseen this, and if it had come to pass, they were prepared to place a man in every box competent enough to let the traffic continue, though with much more delay. Fortunately for both the signalmen and the public, this did not then take place. A strike is only justified when men are unreasonably dealt with. Not even the success of a strike is a proof of its justification. Labour never has been and never will be victorious over capital; neither can capital compel labour; therefore, the only basis on which they can get on and agree is that of reasonableness towards one another. If some of the men have cause to complain of very hard work, some can also grumble at not having enough to do. In the latter case they often fill up their time at wood-carving, fretwork, bird-cage making, and such-like employment, and get very skilful at it; but the silent monotony of such a signal-box as there is at Ribblehead must be worse than overwork. Few men stop there willingly; and I believe it has been made a sort of House of Correction for troublesome men till the last few years. A native is now stationed there, and is happy, much to the joy of those who have been and might be there again.

The signalman has been called the 'lighthouseman

of the iron road,' and that is exactly what he is; but he has a more pleasant life. The solitude of the lighthouse, and the vast expanse of sea around, with occasional storms of such violence as can scarcely be imagined by the landsman, irrespective of all deeds of daring and bravery, will ever make the calling of the lighthouse-keeper a romantic one. But there is no romance in railway life, and the novelist who should endeavour to make it so will be well patronised if he succeed. The feelings of the signalman and lighthouse-keeper must be alike when the one sees a train bounding on to destruction, and the other sees a ship coming straight on to some dangerous rocks. They both will hear the cries of the injured and dying; they both will see mangled bodies lying about, and they both have to put their wits to work to help the sufferers. A thunder-storm at sea as seen from a lighthouse is an awful sight; but from what I have heard from signalmen in exposed positions, I am inclined to believe that it is more awful in a signal-box. The lightning flashing about the levers, the loud cracking reports of the telegraph instrument, which emits sparks of fire, and no one near to speak to, has unnerved for life more than one signalman. It is bravery and a sense of duty that makes a man in that position stick to his post and continue his signalling work. That, as a body, they are mindful of the safety of the public, is proved by the following fact.

At a certain signal-box the signals were seen to be clear for an up and a down train to pass; but before the trains came up, all the signals were observed to be at danger. The trains were brought to a standstill; but no signalman was seen in the box. The guard went up to it, and saw the signalman lying dead on the floor. He must have felt that he was dying; and thinking of the safety of the trains, he pulled the levers to danger with his last strength and fell dead.

Signalmen are not allowed to have strangers in their boxes, nor other servants of the company except on business. That they often do so, the public are well aware; but they may not know that the men so offending are heavily fined. The tiresome monotony of eight or ten hours' working without any company is certainly a great temptation for them to break the rule. The reason for the order is similar to the one on board ship which says, 'Do not talk to the man at the wheel.'

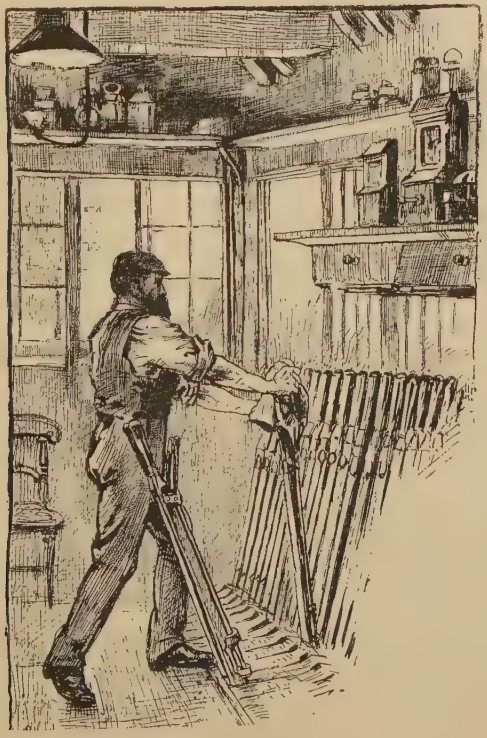
Most signalmen have been porters, and when they have learned the telegraph, are competent to take charge of a box. When, however, a man with little or no experience is to be made a signalman, he has to go through a course of instruction which will occupy him a month or so according to his capabilities. Some are very slow in learning, and some have to be given up entirely. Such a one was a man from the plough, who every time that the

inspector examined him as to what he should do under certain circumstances replied, 'I am sure I don't know.' This went on week after week, till the inspector's patience was getting tired out, and he was told that he would have one more chance. The day came, and a question as usual was put to him, and he gave the same old reply. 'Well, one more question,' said the inspector. 'Supposing an express train passed this box while your signals were at danger, got off the line, and ploughed into those fields yonder, what should you do?' The man scratched his head and replied, 'I should let the darned thing go, and give "line clear."' His case was hopeless.

Signalmen are generally divided into three classes. The first-class men are those at large stations and important junctions, such as Doncaster, Crewe, and Carlisle; the second-class at smaller stations; and the third at roadside stations and block boxes. The last are boxes placed between two stations which are some miles apart, so as to shorten the block. Signal-boxes are seldom more than three miles apart.

The men are allowed a uniform, and similar privileges as are given to porters. Their wages vary according to the class they are in, and are about equal to skilled mechanics. Some lines give the men a half-yearly bonus of twenty or thirty shillings if they have not been fined above a certain amount during the year. They have a great deal

of responsibility; but they have shown themselves equal to it. They are eligible for promotion, and many become inspectors and station-masters in places where there is a great deal of outdoor work. Their position, therefore, may, taking all things into consideration, be considered a comfortable one.



In the Signal Cabin.

CHAPTER XI.

PLATELAYERS.

THE humbler the position of a man, the less able and less willing is he to attract the attention of the public to his troubles and grievances; and consequently he receives many acts of injustice that would not be tolerated by his brethren who are better off from a worldly point of view. It is the same with classes of men as with individuals; and platelayers (called 'surfacemen' in Scotland) belong to the class of workers whose means of livelihood are small, and whose employment may be considered precarious.

It is well known that positions on railways are not always paid according to the amount of work done, and this remark applies equally to officials of every corporate body. If work were paid for on this basis, and the importance of doing it well was also taken into consideration, platelayers would fare better than they do at present. Men holding responsible positions should of course be well paid, whatever the nature of their work may be, and no one expects that agricultural and other labourers,

whose work is not of a responsible nature, nor skilful, should receive wages equal to men who are skilled in some trade, or who have any responsibility attached to their work. On railways, every man who has anything to do with their working or with the permanent way, is more or less a responsible official, and his negligence may at any time cause serious disaster. Engine-drivers, guards, and signalmen are recognised as holding positions of responsibility, and their wages are consequently considerably above those paid to the average labourer.

A platelayer holds the most humble position on a railway; he is looked upon as simply a labourer, and yet is hardly recognised as belonging to the service. He receives no crumbs of comfort in the shape of 'tips,' nor has he a yearly or half-yearly bonus for doing his work well. He is not eligible to join every benefit society; and in the matter of insurance against accidents, he is only accepted at a high premium, on account of the dangerous nature of his employment. He has no uniform supplied to him, not even a greatcoat in winter, to battle against rain, snow, or fog, which he has to do at all times of the day and often at night; and his chances of promotion are—nil. He has the privilege of a free pass once a year, and his wages are a trifle above those paid to a common labourer. Such may be said to be his position in connection with the railway service, and it is not a cheerful one.

Now, for these few earthly benefits, what does a platelayer do? He starts work at 6 A.M. in summer and 7 A.M. in winter, unless he is called up earlier on account of fog or accident. The whole of every line throughout the country is divided out in lengths, varying in distance according to circumstances. Each length is in the charge of a foreman and a few men, who are responsible for the rails and ballast being kept in a safe condition. The foreman is of course directly responsible to his chief, but he in his turn looks to his men as sharing that responsibility.

The length of line is examined twice a day. Rails may require raising, nuts and keys may require fastening, and sleepers may be short of ballast; all points and switches will have to be kept clean and oiled, and the line generally free from litter and obstructions. The fences on each side of the line must also be kept in perfect repair, and culverts and bridges in times of heavy rain must have special attention. When the length includes a tunnel, the same if not more attention has to be paid to their duties, and considerably more has to be paid to their own safety. Their hours of duty are generally about twelve a day.

Platelayers can be appropriately called 'the guardians of the permanent way.' Under a scorching sun in summer and a nipping frost in winter, they can be seen daily at work; and they are thank-

ful if they and their families have sufficient to eat, and can appear as respectable as other people in their position.

Such is briefly their ordinary work; but in foggy weather their work is cold and dangerous, for then they have to stand sentinel for hours together at the different signal-posts along the line, guarding the trains from unseen danger. Their day's work is then a very long one; and when the fog hangs heavy for days together over the country, they are sadly overtaxed. It is impossible to relieve them at such times; and it is only when necessity compels that a railway company will employ men not belonging to the service to perform this work.

It is in foggy weather that this class of men should be thought of, not only by the public, but also by their more fortunate comrades in the service; for it is then that we come across the familiar paragraphs in the newspapers, headed, 'Another platelayer killed in the fog.' And as though these men did not run sufficient risk for their daily earnings, travellers by our trains have added considerably to it by throwing bottles and other articles out of the carriage windows when the train is running at a high rate of speed, and many a platelayer carries the mark caused by such thoughtlessness on the part of the public.

That these men do their work well is sufficiently proved by the small number of accidents to trains

that can be traced to their negligence; and it must be admitted that their work is responsible; yet, with all the drawbacks attending their occupation, they are not much given to grumbling, and they work on till age renders them of little use to their foremen; and though they may have been faithful servants for the best part of their life, yet a grateful railway company has little pity for such humble individuals, and informs them that their services can be dispensed with; and they go—whither we know not, and no one seems to care; but in all probability the workhouse does for them that last office which we shall all require whether we can pay for it or not.

It is not their fault that they are born to assist in protecting the lives of the travelling public at a weekly wage which is sadly inadequate to meet the sickness and breaking-up of the constitution which their work in inclement weather is sure to bring on; but wealthy corporations have seldom compassion on their poorest servants, and it is generally left to the public to give a helping hand to those who, having done their duty in some lowly walk of life, find when it is too late that their employers have only looked upon them as labour-machines from which a certain amount of work can be obtained; and when they are worn out they must be replaced. This class of men, considering their service to the public, have not their fair share in the benefits of those

institutions which the public so largely subscribe to for the sick and needy of railway servants generally; and it would be well if some of the subscribers were to insist on the claims of this deserving class of men being more largely provided for in the future.

CHAPTER XII.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS.

SOME railways and even large ones believe in centralisation, and prefer that all matters shall be dealt with from headquarters. There are advantages in this system, but there are also great disadvantages; and the majority of our important railways see that the latter are greater than the former, and have therefore district superintendents appointed, who have the general supervision of all stations in their several districts, and deal with numerous matters relating thereto, without troubling headquarters. They have, consequently, large powers, and most of the correspondence which ultimately gets to the head offices passes through their hands first. This applies to both goods and passenger departments, each having its own local superintendent. A vast amount of time and trouble is saved by this arrangement, for the man on the spot is more likely to know the necessities of a case than one who visits the district only occasionally, and he can reply

in half the time. The district superintendent has the power to issue passes and allow leave of absence, and he arranges for relief, where it is required. He also sanctions the applications from the different stations for stores and stationery, and every want of a station bears his endorsement before it is attended to. He will have a preliminary investigation into all serious matters, and the result will be sent to his chief in a concise form. In cases of accident he is immediately advised, and if necessary is soon on the spot, and controls all arrangements. He visits all his stations periodically, inspects the offices and waiting-rooms, and inquires into the capabilities of the staff.

Without his recommendation those under him cannot get much promotion. Every man has his weak point, and it is part of the nature of most men to find out that point in those who can be of service to them. If he should be of a military turn of mind, discipline will have to be kept up, and he will expect implicit obedience to his orders, and great respect to himself; or he may have trod the quarter-deck of a man-of-war, and in that case discipline will also be necessary, but not so much palaver as to how you address him will be required; ruffle his temper, however, and the use of the big big D will soon be heard; on the whole he will be liked, as most naval officers are. A witty district superintendent is not unknown—at least in York-

shire—but he is generally a puzzle, and his jokes are apt to bewilder the man who is up before him for some offence, and he probably feels that wit is out of place on such an occasion. The sarcastic man is not pleasant to serve under: he seldom appreciates his men, when they are worthy of it, and if they are not, his ways are hardly likely to make them improve.

But though high in office, their position is not always stable. Their character and actions are ever under the notice of the directors, and a small matter is sometimes sufficient to cause their downfall. The overbearing generally have a short innings, the straightforward and just remain in till the call of 'time.'

CHAPTER XIII.

RAILWAY POLICE.

ALL the great railways of the country have a police department of their own, consisting of a superintendent, a staff of detectives, and constables. The latter are employed at all the large stations to keep order during the day, and protect the premises at night. Extra drafts of police are sent to places on occasions of race meetings, royal visits, shows, &c. This is special duty which may be said to mean keeping an eye on known bad characters, and looking out for pickpockets. In all such times as these they are also assisted by the local police. At important race meetings, such as those held at Epsom, Newmarket, and Doncaster, there is often a temporary lock-up arranged at the station, not only for those caught breaking the law, but also for the safe custody of suspicious characters known to the police, who no sooner alight from the train than they are sent back again, or are locked up till the races are over. Many of them try to travel without tickets,

and are secreted in various ways by their friends and confederates when the train is approaching the ticket-collecting station; but railway officials are up to all the dodges of these individuals, and with the aid of the police the hidden man is brought out, and being generally unable to pay the fare, is taken into custody to appear before the magistrates next morning.

The railway policeman's duties, except on the special occasions referred to, are of a very ordinary nature, consisting chiefly of keeping loafers away from the station premises, and controlling the vehicular traffic arriving at, and departing from, the station. The railway detective, though he has plenty to do, has not such sensational and exciting cases to deal with as falls to the lot of his confrère in the borough or provincial police force. Petty pilferings from parcels in transit, luggage lost or stolen, and goods stolen from wagons during the night, are the chief matters of his daily employment; and they often require months of patient waiting and watching before the delinquents are traced. The first thing is to fix the place where the goods are actually stolen, and when this is done, it is only a matter of time to catch the thief red-handed. For this purpose the detective often spends nights in a sheeted wagon, either travelling with the train or remaining in the goods-yard, and he often experiences very rough usage in his uncomfortable quarters if he is recog-

nised by the staff on duty. A little rough shunting for his special benefit has before now made the detective betray his presence. They are also largely employed in watching passengers supposed to be guilty of defrauding the company. The superintendent of the police department is often the representative of the company at inquests and at courts where a lawyer is not employed, and he works up the evidence in all criminal cases for his superior officer. In these days when railway directors take a more active part in the management of the line than was considered necessary by their predecessors of thirty years ago, police prosecutions and actions at law are not entered without their authority. Railway companies do not always fight their cases sure of winning them, but often with a view of letting the litigious public know that, though a railway company has many vulnerable points, they still have the means to protect themselves against the unjust claimant, and when occasion requires can also act on the offensive.

The first thing a criminal does is to leave the place of his crime, and consequently the railway station is his first place of call. The booking-clerk and porters can often, therefore, give valuable information to the local police, and they in their turn are always ready to assist the station authorities in times of emergency. Some of the most sensational arrests in connection with crime have taken place on the

station platform, and the railway police have had much to do with these cases, though their labours have not been made known to the public; and as their work is simply to serve the company that employs them, their chances of becoming famous in their craft are very small indeed.

CHAPTER XIV.

ACCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES.

WITH all the improved appliances now in use for the prevention of accidents on railways, the time has not arrived, and never will arrive, when they will be matters of impossibility. With very few exceptions all railway accidents that have resulted in serious loss of life have been caused through the collision of two trains. The block system, if properly carried out, prevents two trains being in one section of the same line at the same time. The interlocking of signals and points makes it impossible for a careless signalman to let a train go on the wrong line; and the automatic brake, which, independent of being under the control of the guard and driver, will of itself bring a train to a standstill as soon as the gearing is damaged or severed through vehicles being off the line, or through the train becoming divided, are all improvements that the Board of Trade have insisted on our railway companies carrying out for the safety

of the public; and the result is a remarkable decrease in accidents of a serious nature.

The excitement and nervousness following an accident is only natural; but it speaks well for railway men that at such times they can keep cool, and that orders are given and obeyed in a manner to prevent further panic or fear on the part of the passengers. Accidents have been so often described in the newspapers, that one can imagine the scenes without wishing to be a witness of them. Though everything is now done to lessen the risk of casualties on railways, there are yet some accidents which no earthly power can avoid or foresee, and which man with all his scientific skill is powerless to avert. A flaw in the axle of a wagon will cause it one day to leave the rails. This is a common occurrence, and in itself is not a serious matter, only causing the train-service for a while to be disorganised; but if this casualty takes place at night, causing both lines to be blocked just at the time when an express passenger-train is due to pass that spot, and which may even then be a few hundred yards away, that simple accident may cause the wreck of the passenger-train, people to be seriously injured, and lives to be lost.

All the appliances that human ingenuity can devise would not prevent a catastrophe in such circumstances; but if there is a minute or two to spare, a man equal to such an emergency may do so.

The guard or driver of the train off the line, hearing the oncoming express in the distance, knows that there is now only one way to stop it in time to save a collision; so taking his lamp with his red light turned on, he rushes forward to meet it, all the time waving the lamp violently in front of him. The driver is almost sure to see it, and knows well what that signal means, and brings his train to a stop within a few yards of the obstruction. There is no time in such cases to communicate with the signalman or even to put down detonators on the line.

It is a case of sudden emergency, and the man who can instantly grasp the state of affairs, and act quickly in such a case, will ever be superior to all mechanical signals. There are hundreds of instances unrecorded, where men have by their quickness in judgment and action prevented serious accidents. Railway life is one long training how to meet emergencies; and most men, whether they be porters, guards, drivers, or signalmen, after they have been a few years in the service, will be called upon at some time or other to act with promptitude and ability at a moment's notice in cases of vital importance to the public and their fellow-workmen. If all such cases were recorded it would be seen that the railway service has its heroes, who are as much entitled to rewards and honours as those men in the army and navy whose noble actions invari-

ably find a chronicler in the newspapers of the day; and it may be satisfactory to know that men who have been the means of preventing an accident are always rewarded.

It has been noticed that railway men are invariably very reticent in giving information to the public regarding anything being wrong on the line; and it is generally supposed that this is on account of the dislike of railway companies to publicity in such matters, but this is not so. The cause of the silence or pretended ignorance on the part of railway men as to what has gone wrong, is simply their desire to prevent passengers being alarmed, for they are so soon apt to conclude that if there is one accident another is sure to follow; but with the energetic reporter ever on the lookout for news, the particulars of any casualty soon become known, and unfortunately the facts are often exaggerated.

It is very questionable whether it would not be better policy for railway companies to give official copy of all accidents, as soon as it is possible to do so, for if this were done the inaccurate and often damaging reports would then be taken for what they were worth. When it is admitted that a person is far safer travelling in an express train, than he is walking the streets of London, the British public can better realise the amount of care and watchfulness on the part of railway men generally to prevent an accident taking place.

CHAPTER XV.

RAILWAYS IN THE FUTURE.

RAILWAYS, though instituted more than fifty years ago, are still in their infancy, and there is no denying the fact that this infant institution has progressed beyond the anticipations of the original promoters of the great trunk lines. Year by year some marked improvement is visible, in the matter of either speed or comfort; and though there is finality in all things, it does not appear that the present generation will witness the absolute perfection of railway travelling. Our fathers were satisfied with travelling two hundred miles in ten hours; they grumbled not at the hard straight-backed third-class carriage; and the flickering light in the roof-lamps, clouded with smoke and dirt, was borne with an equanimity hardly credited at the present day; yet in less than a quarter of a century the slow parliamentary train for long distances is all but extinct; the third-class passenger can now travel his two hundred miles in five hours by any train in a comfortable cushioned

carriage; and at night, the electric light or gas enables him to read with pleasure, and gives the compartment a bright and cheerful aspect. The third-class passenger, who was once treated as of no consequence, and for whom anything was considered good enough, is now the chief consideration with railway directors. The masses are gradually and surely becoming the arbiters of what shall be and what shall not be. As far as comfort and speed are concerned, there is little cause of complaint at the present day; but the public are not satisfied with other matters; they have agitated for cheaper rates for their merchandise, and when that concession is granted, there will be a move for a reduction in passenger fares.

The zone system, adopted with success in Hungary, is already advocated for trial in this country; and there has even been a scheme propounded for free railway travelling; but neither of these suggestions could be carried out while railways are in the hands of several companies, each working their line as it suits them best. Whether the Board of Trade can force the hands of the companies in the matter of reduction in rates and fares remains to be seen; but there must be a limit to that interference, or the only alternative will be for the state to take over the railways and work them itself. There is a growing feeling that this will eventually be done, and the only strong argument against such a scheme

is, that through want of competition there would be a lack of energy and improvement in the service generally that would militate against the public advantage. If this were to be so, that argument would be sufficient to settle the question.

The case of the German railways being taken over by the state, is given as an instance where the public have suffered in the matter of general facilities by the change, although it is admitted that from a pecuniary point of view the working has been most satisfactory. But the British public will hardly take such an example as sufficient evidence against the advisability of the transfer of our railways to the state. There is a power in this country that can and has ruled the state, a power that centuries of parliamentary government has made supreme—Public Opinion. In Germany, the voice of the people is little more than a whisper, and consequently it seldom reaches the powers that be; and when it does, there is no force at the back of it to give the rulers a hint that it would be policy to give it some attention. The consequence is that the German government manage their railways without the criticism of the public or of bodies of shareholders.

With us it would be different; and we have in the Post-office an example of splendid efficacy in state management of a great public business without the aid of competition. Any neglect or

bad management in that service is made the subject of a question in the House of Commons, where there are always sufficient members present of a progressive turn of mind to add their voice in favour of improvement. It would be the same if our railways were managed by the government. Such a change would result in many advantages to the public. The working expenses would drop at least twenty-five per cent., and the profits, after the government dividend on the Railway Consols had been paid, would go towards reducing rates and fares. The zone or any other system which necessitates the railways being under one management could then be worked permanently or on trial. Cheaper travelling is sure to come in the future; but with the working expenses so high as they now are, railway directors cannot see their way to make a change which would involve them in trouble with the shareholders.

Like all great changes in this country, whether religious, political, or commercial, this one must bide its time till the public are ready for it and pronounce in its favour; and though years may elapse before it takes place, yet the change will certainly come about eventually. Railway officials from the highest to the lowest would probably prefer to be servants of the state rather than of a public company; as civil servants, they would expect to find that promotion would be by merit, and not

by favour, as it largely is at the present time; long hours would then be the exception, not the rule; and Sunday duty would be paid for, which it is not at present, except under certain conditions. All servants in the passenger department of our railways are paid at the rate of seven days a week, so that theoretically they should work every Sunday to earn a full week's wage; but this arrangement is gradually being replaced by a more considerate one which allows every servant to be off duty at least one Sunday in every two. It is an old adage that says, 'Those who live longest will see most;' and before the present generation of railway men have passed away, they will have much to be thankful for, as compared with the conditions of the service which obtained in their early days.

We have not been in the habit of copying the Americans in railway matters, and it was never thought that the ways of American railways would suit the British taste; but there is gradually growing up a change in this opinion. We have tried the Pullman cars, and they are becoming more popular with us; and it is not improbable that one company will decide for the future to build all their carriages on that principle. When, years ago, the second class was abolished on the Midland Railway, it was generally thought that a mistake was made, and that in time the old order of classes would have to be reverted to; but we see now that

other companies are following in the same direction, and it is even mooted in certain quarters that it is the intention of one railway company to do away with classes altogether. If this is so, it is not at all improbable that our railways in the future will be worked on the same lines as are the American railways. This would break down the reserve and exclusiveness which is peculiar to the British traveller, and do much towards making liberty, equality, and fraternity something more than a theoretical doctrine in this aristocratic country.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN it is borne in mind that there was no such thing as railway life a little more than fifty years ago, one can wonder at its rapid development. Those fifty years have completely changed the habits of this country, and in the matter of trade there is no doubt that the height of prosperity has been reached through the means of railways, as much as by free trade, colonisation, or intellectual superiority. Railway men are a power in the country, numbering as they do over 300,000 souls, and it is to their credit that they are a law-abiding class, and lean very little towards those doctrines that would upset not only the throne, but the social peace of the country at large. In this large body of men the nation have a reserve force which would have to be reckoned with before any invader could say he had conquered us. The railways could on an emergency spare half their men, and move them in a few hours to any part of the country. There would need to be no

conscription if ever such a crisis arrived; it would be a patriotic and voluntary movement on the part of the men.

It has been wondered how the trade of the country was carried on in the days when the stage-coach and road wagons were the chief means of transit. It is difficult without statistics to show the smallness of the trade in those days as compared with the present time. To go back to the old dispensation now would be impossible; the country would be ruined, and Macaulay's New Zealander on Westminster Bridge would be not only a possibility but a probability. To cut off all communication by rail with London would soon reduce that city to starvation. Thousands of wagons are arriving every night in London laden with the necessities of life, and a severe snow-storm lasting twenty-four hours has caused prices of food to rise considerably. What a prolonged scarcity would mean imagination must picture, as fortunately London has not up to the present experienced anything more than a vexatious delay in the arrival of its commissariat. Railways enjoy a great monopoly, but there are signs that an old-fashioned competitor is again coming to the front. The much-despised canal is finding favour at the hands of large numbers of business men. Its sleepy existence had to succumb to the speed of railways; and in all but a few cases the canals of our country have been so neglected

that a barge would have a difficulty in moving along even if it could get afloat.

The Suez Canal has been a success even in the matter of speedy transport. The Manchester Ship Canal will in all probability be an accomplished fact; and the old waterways of the country are being looked into, with the view of having them dredged and widened, that they may be brought again into use for traffic which can bear delay. The working expenses of a canal per mile are not a tenth of the sum necessary to maintain a railway, and the latter will find it difficult to compete with the former in the matter of rates.

That railways are much to blame in the matter of excessive rates their best friends will admit, and it is this feeling that the companies have abused their monopoly that has caused the idea of bringing our canals into operation again; and should the latter find favour amongst manufacturers and others, the railways of this country will indeed come upon dark days.

The expectations of railway shareholders were once very high, and the profits were expected to be immense; but these expectations have never been realised, and most holders of railway stock are now very contented if they get five per cent. on their investments. Competition amongst lines running in the same direction is very keen, and improvements in carriages, stations, and general accommodation are

sharply taken up if there is any hope of getting more traffic thereby; but it is a very expensive proceeding, and the working expenses of a railway are consequently higher than those of any other trading concern.

THE END.

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